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THE INDUSTRY AUTHORITY ON SPECIALTY TOBACCO RETAILING

SMOKESHOPMAG.COM | OCTOBER 2019



Phil Zanghi Comes Full Circle: Cruising with Indian Motorcycle Cigars

Plus:

- *Wood Projections, Inc.: The Industry Leader in Retail Cigar Cabinets & Humidors*
- *Missouri Meerschaum Co. Marks 150 Years as the Pioneer of the Corn Cob Pipe*
- *Davidoff America's Dylan Austin: Preserving the Davidoff Brand's Exclusivity*

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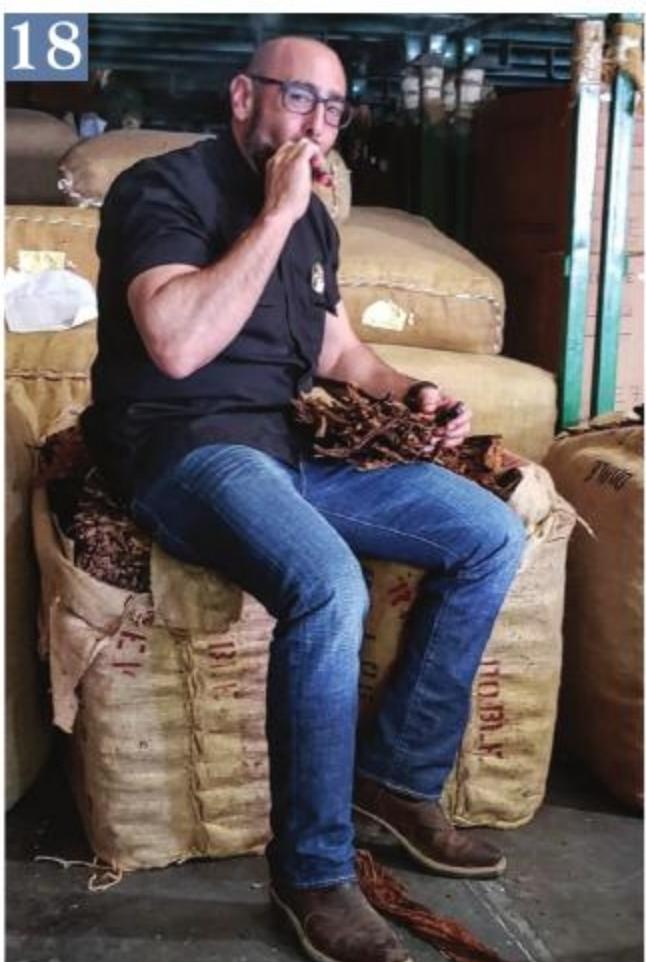
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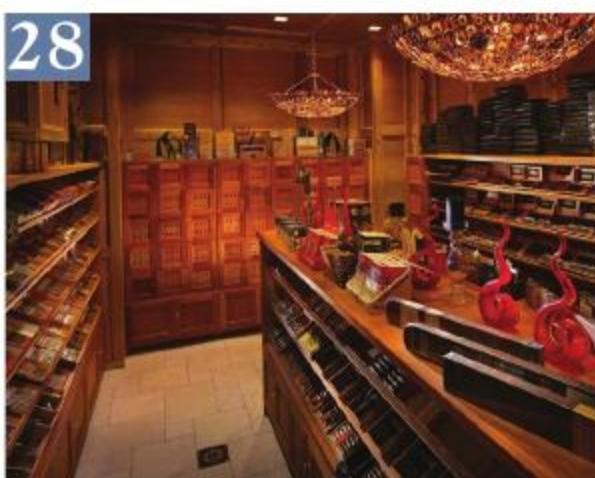
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Editor's LETTER

The Never-Ending Fight to Extract Premium Cigars from OTP—and Now Vape—Regulation

How long will the list grow? Legislation introduced in Congress seemingly intending to address one or more narrow issues which, due to a complete lack of understanding about the myriad of product segments that collectively comprise "the tobacco industry," has far-reaching, and unintended affects, on other segments.

The term "unintended" is used cautiously, since when it comes to tobacco/nicotine regulation, many anti-tobacco stakeholders could care less about splitting hairs: any screws tightened against any segment is a win. Period.

This is where industry stakeholders step in, and it's clear that premium cigars long ago turned a corner in trying to find a voice for itself as it was repeatedly swept along by a tidal wave of regulation aimed at cigarettes and smokeless (of all things), and then by OTP and vape.

In late October, one such bill addressing vape taxes moved forward without a massive new tax on premium cigars that was included in the original version. And the premium cigar industry is justified in taking credit for the win.

The House Ways & Means Committee approved legislation sponsored by Rep. Tom Suozzi (D-NY) and Rep. Peter King (R-NY) by a vote of 24-15 to approve a new tax on e-cigarettes calculated on the amount of nicotine in vaping liquid. It is designed to be approximately equivalent to taxes on tobacco products. The Joint Committee on Taxation said the new tax would raise \$9.9 billion over a decade.

Earlier in October, the Premium Cigar Association (PCA) launched a grassroots campaign against the original Suozzi-King bill, which included a significant tax increase on cigars and on pipe tobacco. Over 2,200+ retailers and their customers responded, bolstering PCA's direct lobbying of 20 key Congressmen on the committee of jurisdiction including both bill sponsors.

"The change in direction prior to the Committee mark-up, specifically excluding any new taxes on premium cigars and pipe tobacco, demonstrates the importance of continuous advocacy and education about our industry," said PCA Federal Affairs Director Joshua Habursky. "And this is why we are continuing to build out our education programs that directly target members of Congress as well as administrative bodies."

PCA executive director Scott Pearce noted that this progress underscores the importance of PCA members taking action and adding their voices to the fight.

"The change in course on taxation proves the power of a small business narrative and the critical role that retailers play in shaping public policy," PCA reported. "The PCA will remain vigilant as Congress continues the debate over vaping products to ensure that premium cigars and pipe tobacco don't become collateral damage."

The industry has been imploring each of its distant corners to "get involved," as no fight can be won by only a sliver of participants. There has always been, and always will be, power in numbers. Starting with the industry's trade associations, expanding to manufacturers and distributors, then to retailers and finally consumers, the network of potential voices remains far bigger than the actual tally has reached, but each year progress is made.

You can get involved in advocating for premium cigars and pipe tobacco by signing up at PCA's portal at cigaraction.org/join-now, and at Cigar Rights of America at cigarrights.org, and advocating to your colleagues and customers do the same. Your business survival depends upon it.

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A black and white photograph of a woman with long dark hair and hoop earrings, wearing a patterned top, holding a lit cigarette in her right hand. In the background, a Native American man with a mustache and a goatee is looking directly at the camera. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and shadows.

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Bipartisan Bill Hikes OTP Tax, Bans Vape Flavors

New York state Rep. Tom Suozzi, D-N.Y. and Rep. Pete King, R-N.Y. introduced the Quell Underage Inhaling of **Toxic Substances (QUITS) Act** in Sept., which proposes a federal ban on flavors in e-cigarette and tobacco products; creating a federal tax on e-cigarettes; raising the existing federal taxes on cigarettes and other tobacco products; and increasing the budget for the CDC's Office on Smoking and Health. The legislation is the most comprehensive of its kind to be introduced in Congress. It proposes hiking the tax on small cigars from \$50.33 per thousand to \$150 and on pipe tobacco from \$2.8311 cents per pound to \$73.85. In addition, it would also change the basis of taxing large cigars from 52.75% of the sale price with a 40.26 cent per cigar cap, to a weight-based calculation of \$73.85 per pound with a 15 cent per cigar minimum.

Cigar House Retail Shop Joins Lancaster Cigar Bar

LANCASTER, PA.—Daniel Falcón, owner of Lancaster Cigar Bar and the adjacent Old San Juan Latin Cuisine & Rum Bar, continues to expand his lifestyle business presence in downtown Lancaster, Penna. with the opening of his latest extension, a retail cigar shop called Cigar House. All three businesses are located in the Hager Arcade Building on Lancaster's North Market Street.

Cigar House was envisioned as the area's premier retail cigar experience, specializing in box sales, humidors, lighters, cutters and other accessories. In keeping with Falcón's penchant for creating destination spaces, it features a full bar.

Over a year in planning, Cigar House held a soft opening in July, followed by its official grand opening in August. It features one of the area's largest walk-in humidors—

a glass-enclosed room that showcases and extensive selection of premium cigars, including his own growing portfolio of custom-made Falcón Cigars.

Falcon explains that Lancaster Cigar Bar, which just celebrated its fifth anniversary this fall, is positioned as an upscale/business attire destination serving fine cocktails and spirits. It also features a small walk-in humidor. A native of Puerto Rico, Falcón was inspired to open Old San Juan Latin Cuisine & Rum Bar following a trip to Puerto Rican tobacco in an elusive attempt to source Puerto Rican tobacco to create a custom house blend cigar.

Rather, he created Falcón Cigar 1977 Serie Connecticut (Dominican, Nicaraguan, Peruvian fill, Ecuadorian binder, and Connecticut wrapper), as well as versions with Habano and or San Andres Maduro wrappers.

New&Notable

Cumming Cigar Co., Cumming, Ga., celebrated its grand opening in August. The cigar shop and lounge, located in a carefully restored historic downtown Sinclair gas station, serves beer on tap as well as wine, features outdoor seating areas, and hosts live entertainment.



4 The Win Cigar Shop & Lounge in downtown Tullahoma, Tenn., celebrated its grand opening in August. Owners Scott and Wendy McCain opened the 1,500 sq ft shop as destination spot specializes in high-end cigars and accessories. It's appointed in classic speakeasy decor featuring dark mahogany cherry wood trim, leather couches, and highback executive chairs. It serves local and micro-brews.

Primo Cigars and Coffee, the downtown Norfolk, Va. tobacco shop located inside the Southern Eats restaurant, is renovating a decommissioned trolley streetcar installed outside of the building that will serve as a standalone fully ventilated cigar (and pipe tobacco) bar. Owner Michael Vecchione told the Virginian-Pilot the trolley will seat up to 12 people in leather furniture.

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Mac Baren Acquires Planta Tabak's Pipe, RYO Brands

SVENDBORG, DENMARK—Mac Baren Tobacco announced an agreement to acquire the outstanding brands from Planta Tabak-Manufacturer's traditional portfolio.

"We are very proud to have completed the acquisition of the pipe and fine-cut tobacco business of Planta Tabak-Manufaktur," said Mac Baren CEO Simon Sophus Nielsen. "The Planta portfolio includes a number of very strong and internationally renowned brands that strengthen the product range of the Mac Baren Tobacco Company. We look forward to developing and leveraging the full potential of these wonderful brands across all our markets globally."

For Nils Obermann and Lukas Stiller, the young managing directors of the traditional Kreuzberg company, the move was a difficult but deliberate step. After 63 years and three generations of successful ownership, the family-owned company stopped producing tobacco in Berlin on August 31st, 2019.

"With the many challenges our family has faced over the past few years and the ever-increasing requirements of the EU To-



bacco Directive, we have decided to withdraw from tobacco production," said Obermann.

The decision to discontinue the Planta Tobacco production in Berlin does not mean the end of Planta's popular pipe tobacco and fine cut brands. Brands like Danish Black Vanilla, Holger Danske, Cellini, PL88, and Cheetah, will be continued by Mac Baren Tobacco Company. "Mac Baren's offer to acquire our business required little consideration and we quickly agreed," said Stiller. "Like us, Mac Baren is an old, well-established family business, and we are very happy that the legacy of our parents and grandparents will continue," Stiller added.

Going forward, international sales for Planta Tobacco will be managed directly by Mac Baren Denmark, while German distribution will remain in Berlin at Unitas Tabakfabrik GmbH, a Planta sister company that was included in the transaction.

The parties also announced that Obermann has agreed to stay with the business as managing director with Unitas.

Room101 Moves Cigar Distribution to La Palina

LOS ANGELES—Room101 Cigars announced in October that it had changed distribution partners and that effective immediately, Room101's cigars are now being distributed by La Palina Cigar Co.

Matt Booth's Room101 brand has been making cigars for over 10 years. After a brief departure from the cigar industry in 2017, Booth returned in 2018 with a collaboration brand with Robert Caldwell of Caldwell Cigar Co. and AJ Fernandez.

From then onward, Room101 had been distributed by Down and Back, LLC, a distribution company founded by Caldwell that also distributed Caldwell and La Barba products, in addition to Room101. Room101's shift to La Palina has been in the works for some time



and is a business move that all parties, including Caldwell, is in support of as Room101 continues to grow and expand.

"I have decided to work with two of my longest standing—and one of my newest—friends in the industry in connection with the overall management and distribution of the Room101 brand's premium tobacco portfolio," Booth commented. "This union will serve the mutual benefit of both organizations and is reflective of our resolve to provide our retail partners with the best service and support possible."

Down and Back, LLC will continue to distribute the two cigars that Booth and Caldwell collaborated on: Hit & Run and The T.

Bits & Pieces

> Facing increasing government and public scrutiny over underage vaping, **Juul Labs** announced in October it was immediately suspending all sales of its "non-tobacco, non-menthol-based flavored products until they are reviewed by the FDA. In November 2018, Juul suspended distribution of its mango, creme, fruit, and cucumber flavored products to retail stores, limiting their sale solely to its own online store front.

> Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker signed house bill 2276 bill in late August banning smoking with a minor in a car whether the car is stopped, or the windows are rolled down. The law, which goes into effect Jan. 1, 2020, applies only to combustible smoking products—cigarettes, pipes, cigars, and marijuana—but not vaping.

> In response to newly proposed federal legislation that would massively increase taxes for all tobacco products, including premium cigars and traditional pipe tobacco, the **Premium Cigar Association (PCA)** launched a campaign to oppose the measures, which purport to address the youth vaping epidemic. The legislation threatens the viability of thousands of small businesses across the country and risks putting tens of thousands of employees out of work, said PCA.



CATTLE BARON

Cigars

RATINGS

Cigar Authority: Stockyard **90**

Cigar Coop: Stockyard **91**

Kaplowitz: Trail Boss **A-**
Bull **A-**

Smoke Magazine: Trail Boss **93**



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► Turning Point Brands Lowers 2019 Targets Citing Weak Third-Party Vaping Distribution Performance

LOUISVILLE, KY—Turning Point Brands, a leading provider of OTP and NGP alternatives, announced higher net sales and gross profits for the third quarter ended September 30, 2019, but lower net income.

Net sales increased 16.1% to \$96.8 million; gross profit increased 18.2% to \$42.8 million; and net income decreased \$1.7 million to \$6.3 million, the company reported.

"Vaping headlines dramatically disrupted our third-party vaping distribution business starting in mid-August," said Larry Wexler, president and c.e.o. "While third-party vaping saw a step function down in the quarter, we produced strong quarterly performance in the smokeless and smoking segments. We have proactively taken steps to address weakness in the third-party

vaping distribution business."

The company reported smokeless net sales increased 20.4% year-over-year driven by double digit same-store sales growth and chain wins for the Stokers' MST brand.

Smoking net sales increased 7.6% year-over-year due to "growing interest in wraps and papers and a bottoming of the previously disclosed Canadian destocking process."

The company also reported significant new category sales in new generation products segment, driven by the national launches of RipTide and CBD disposables.

The company said it remains heavily committed to capitalizing on its core competencies in branding, distribution, product development, and regulatory affairs to create "mar-

ket-leading products," including investing in the FDA PMTA process the company's proprietary brands, as well as growing the CBD and other actives businesses.

"However, management believes the expected future returns from third-party vaping distribution may no longer justify the required investment of human and financial resources going forward," the company declared. "Accordingly, the board of directors is reviewing strategic alternatives for the third-party vaping distribution business."

Turning Point stated is will continue to re-purpose infrastructure from the third-party distribution business to support proprietary CBD sales, which continue to grow month-over-month. "In addition once we complete the FDA's PMTA process, we expect to be one of the only open system liquids players on the market," said Wexler.

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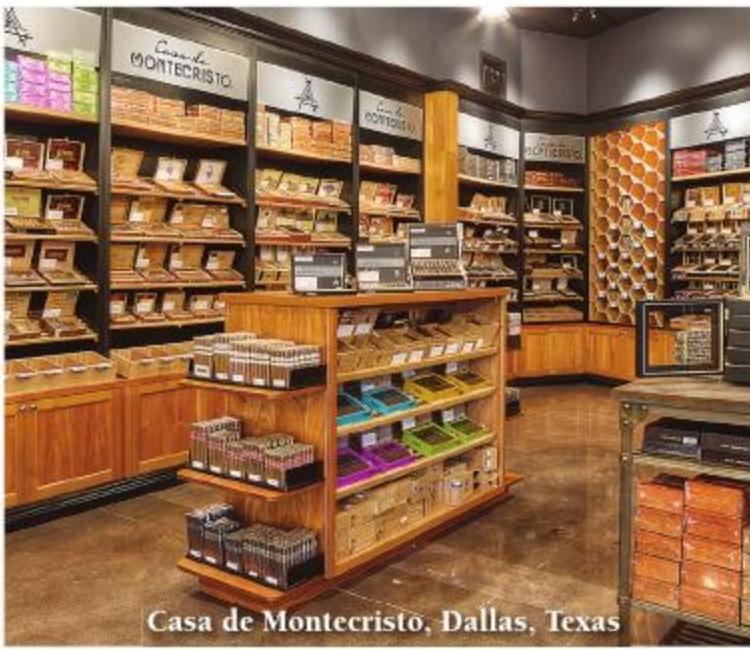
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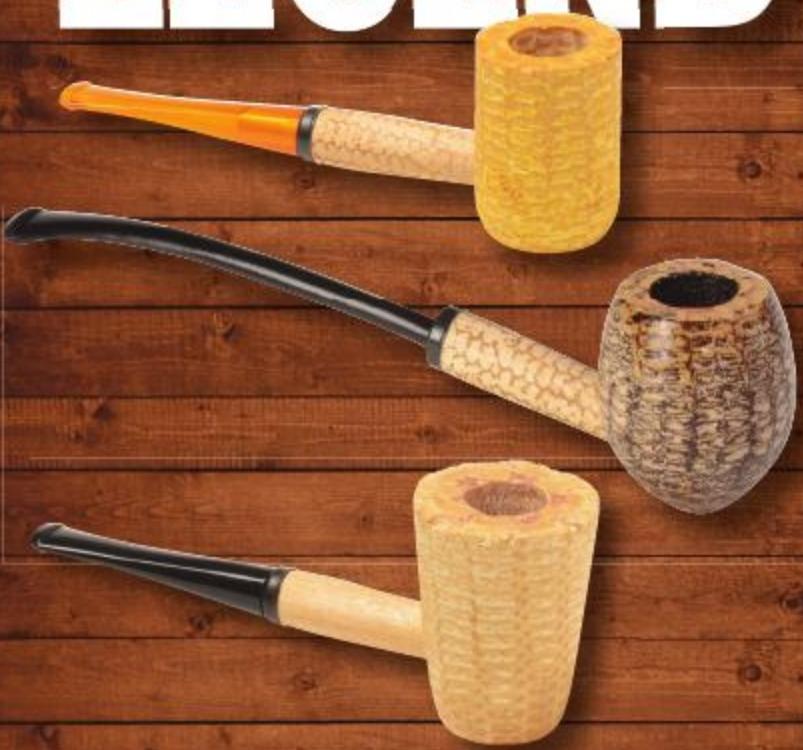
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Industry NEWS

► Personnel Moves

> **Davidoff of Geneva USA**, the U.S. based subsidiary of Oettinger Davidoff AG, announce two promotions.

Lana Fraser, director brand marketing, has been appointed director, head of marketing for Davidoff of Geneva Americas. Fraser will lead strategic and day-to-day oversight of the company's entire brand portfolio and marketing team for the Americas business, which includes North America, LATAM, and the Caribbean. In addition, Fraser will continue to lead marketing for Davidoff of Geneva since 1911, both retail stores and the online business.

In addition, **Jeffrey Guagliardo**, director key accounts, has been named director, head of sales for Davidoff of Geneva USA. Guagliardo became part of the Davidoff team in 2009 after the acquisition of Cusano Cigars and has held various roles within the company, predominately within the commercial department. Previously as head of key accounts and in-house sales, he was responsible for the company's large catalog / online, wholesale, liquor and chain accounts; along with Canada, managing the company's in-house sales team and private label business.

Both Fraser and Guagliardo succeed Dylan Austin who had the dual role of heading sales and marketing for the company before being named president of Davidoff of Geneva USA in March 2019.



Fraser



Guagliardo

> **Alec Bradley Cigar Co.** announced in September the promotion of **Michael Serota** to vice president of sales. Serota joined Alec Bradley in May of 2011 and has worked his way through many different roles- including operations, sales support and, most recently, key account management. In his new role, Serota will be managing the national sales team, as well as continuing relationships with key accounts.



Serota

> **Fratello Cigars** announced that **Justin Harris** has joined the company as director of operations. Harris will be responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations in the company's Springfield, Va. office including but not limited to customer relations, human resources, logistics, process and quality improvement and new initiatives. Harris bring over 15 years experience as a human resources executive specializing in management development and organizational behavior as well as serving as the creative director at CigarInsight.com.



Harris

► Calendar

NOVEMBER 20–22, 2019

1st China International Cigar Expo (ICE)

Shenzhen Convention and Exhibition Center, Shenzhen, China. Hosted by China Cigarette Sales Corporation and Shenzhen Municipal Tobacco Company Inc., organized by Shenzhen Tobacco Import & Export Co., Ltd. Web: cigarambassador.com.

JANUARY 21–25, 2020

Puro Sabor 2020

Nicaraguan Cigar Festival

Managua, Granada, and Estelí, Nicaragua. Contact: Nicaraguan Chamber of Tobacco (CNT), Email: nicaraguancigarfestival.com, Web: nicaraguancigarfestival.com.

JANUARY 29–31, 2020

Tobacco Plus Expo (TPE) 2020

Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas, Nev. Tobacco, vape, alternative, and general merchandise show; industry tracks including conferences and round tables. Web: tobaccoplusexpo.com.

FEBRUARY 16–21, 2020

Procigar Festival 2020

La Romana and Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic. Premium cigar festival featuring cigar factory and tobacco farm tours, seminars and tastings, excursions, dinner parties, golf tournament, poker tour-

nament, and charity auction. Contact: ProCigar, Web: procigar.org.

FEBRUARY 24–26, 2020

Convenience Distribution Marketplace 2020

Hyatt Regency Hill Country Resort & Spa, San Antonio, Texas. Presented by Convenience Distribution Association (CDA). Convenience products wholesale distribution conference featuring distributor-focused education sessions, annual awards luncheon, networking events, and highly-targeted one-day marketplace show floor. Contact: CDA, Reston, Va., Tel: (703) 208-3358, Web: cdaweb.net.

FEBRUARY 24–28, 2020

22nd Habanos Festival

Havana, Cuba. Tobacco plantation and cigar factory visits, trade fair and seminars, international habanosommelier contest, cigar rolling master class, social events. Contact: Habanos S.A., Web: festivaldelhabano.com, habanos.com.

MARCH 22–26, 2020

TAA 52nd Annual Convention

Sheraton Grand Los Cabos Hacienda del Mar, Los Cabos, Mexico. Members only. Contact: Tobacconists' Association of America, Tel: (770) 597-6264, Email: info@thetaa.org, Web: thetaa.org.

APRIL 4, 2020

23rd Annual Raleigh Pipe & Tobacco Expo

N.C. State Fairgrounds, Gov. James E. Holshauser Building, Raleigh, N.C.

Hosted by the Triangle Area Pipe Smokers (TAPS). Contact: TAPS, Tel: (919) 848-0685, Email: show@tapsclub.us, Web: tapsclub.us.

MAY 2–3, 2020

Chicagoland Tobacciana Show

The Mega Center, Pheasant Run Resort, St. Charles, Ill. Pipe & tobacco marketplace. Contact: Craig Cobine, Chicagoland Pipe Collectors Club, porshcigar@aol.com, Tel: (630) 236-6202, Web: chicagopipeshow.com.

JULY 10–14, 2020

PCA 88th Annual Convention and International Trade Show

Sands Expo Center, Las Vegas, Nev. Contact: Premium Cigar Association (PCA), Washington, D.C., Tel: (202) 621-8064, Email: info@premiumcigars.org, Web: premiumcigars.org.

AUGUST 27–28, 2020

24th Annual Smoker Friendly Conference & Tobacco Festival

Omni Interlocken Resort, Broomfield, Colo. Contact: Mary Szarmach, Toll-free: (888) 751-2785 ext. 217, Email: info@smokerfriendly.com, Web: smokerfriendly.com.

SEPTEMBER 18–20, 2020

InterTabac/InterSupply Dortmund

Westfalenhallen Dortmund, Germany. 34th International Trade Fair Contact: Nina Kapitan, Tel: +(49)(231) 1204-586, Fax: +(49)(231) 1204-678, Email: mina.kapitan@westfalenhallen.de, Web: www.inter-tabac.de.

Villiger Cigar North America to Sponsor 2020 Tobacco Plus Expo "All Industry Party"

LAS VEGAS, NV—Premium cigar manufacturer Villiger Cigars has announced it has signed on to sponsor the 2020 Tobacco Plus Expo (TPE) "All Industry Party," taking place at the Sahara Vegas Hotel (formerly the SLS Las Vegas Hotel). Details about the event will be announced at a future date.

Now in its 15th year, the Tobacco Plus Expo is a focused B2B tradeshow that brings together top buyers and premium tobacco, vape, and alternative industries.

TPE 2020 will take place from Jan. 29–Jan. 31, 2020 in Las Vegas, Nevada at the Las Vegas Convention Center, and show organizers say they are "looking forward to it biggest show ever."

Villiger Cigar NA president Rene Castaneda said, "We at Villiger Cigars are excited to be present at the 2020 TPE in their 15th year. We look forward to making our brand presence felt at the All Industry Party, and invite our friends, colleagues, media, and customers to



what will be the biggest TPE show yet."

For information about the Tobacco Plus Expo 2020 (TPE), including updates on schedules, seminars, and participating exhibitors, visit Tobaccoplusexpo.com.



Phil Zanghi, Indian Motorcycle Cigars

Full Circle

Today's Indian Motorcycle, and its companion premium cigar launched in 2015, have followed a long and winding road, second only to cigar maker Phil Zanghi's own professional journey. Once again, Zanghi is riding high at the center of an iconic, and very personal, American classic.

> BY FRANK SELTZER

The cigar business is in Phil Zanghi's blood. After all, what high school senior starts his own cigar company? That's what Zanghi did in 1991, when he founded Indian Tabac. That company has come and gone, but Zanghi has continued on. For a while, he left the premiums to help partner Danny Sinclair on the mass market side, but eventually came back—first with his Debonaire line and now his latest brand, Indian Motorcycle, which brings him full circle.

In 1990, Zanghi's father had started Indian Motorcycle Company in Massachusetts with the promise of making the legendary bike once more. Zanghi thought the cigar was a natural tie-in, so he went for it, partnering with U.S. Tobacco in Danlí, Honduras to produce his cigars. He got them, but then things did not go as planned.

"The motorcycle company was not all it seemed," says Zanghi, "and my father robbed all the money from the company. It was a big drama. At that point we moved to North Carolina to concentrate on the accessories and apparel for Indian Motorcycle. We still had the pretense of building the bike. When it fell all apart, I was still in North Carolina and still had all the cigars. The only thing I had left from Indian Motorcycle Company was the cigars and the Indian Tabac Company." With no money, Zanghi did grunt work moving furniture to save up some cash to fulfill his dream of Indian Tabac. That was in 1994, just as the cigar boom was taking off.

Zanghi went back down to Honduras and to U.S. Tobacco to get more cigars made, but was told the company was no



About the same time, Zanghi got word that his father was gravely ill in California, and went out to see him, as he was now trying to make amends—the two had not spoken since the Indian fiasco. Zanghi's father was a founding member of the Grand Havana room in Beverly Hills, so Zanghi asked him for a

silent partner. But the following year, 1998, Rocky started going on the road to help out with sales.

The pair had a lot of great cigars and good tobacco thanks to Nestor Plasencia, but for Zanghi it meant too much work: being in Latin America at the factory and then out on the road. Rocky liked the salesman role and the two had a falling out. By 2001 Zanghi was done and planned to become an air marshal since he had just had his first son. But a man he had met in 1997, Danny Sinclair, had other ideas.

Sinclair was working on the mass market side of the industry and doing well, but he was having trouble with his factory. He asked Zanghi to come help, since everyone in Honduras and Nicaragua knew "Zanghiipo." Zanghi agreed and by 2002 was working full time with Danny. The next year was a lot of work as the Honduran factory continued to deteriorate. Zanghi and Danny finally decided to move the operation to the Dominican Republic and to work with the Reyes family, whom Zanghi had known from his Indian Tabac days.

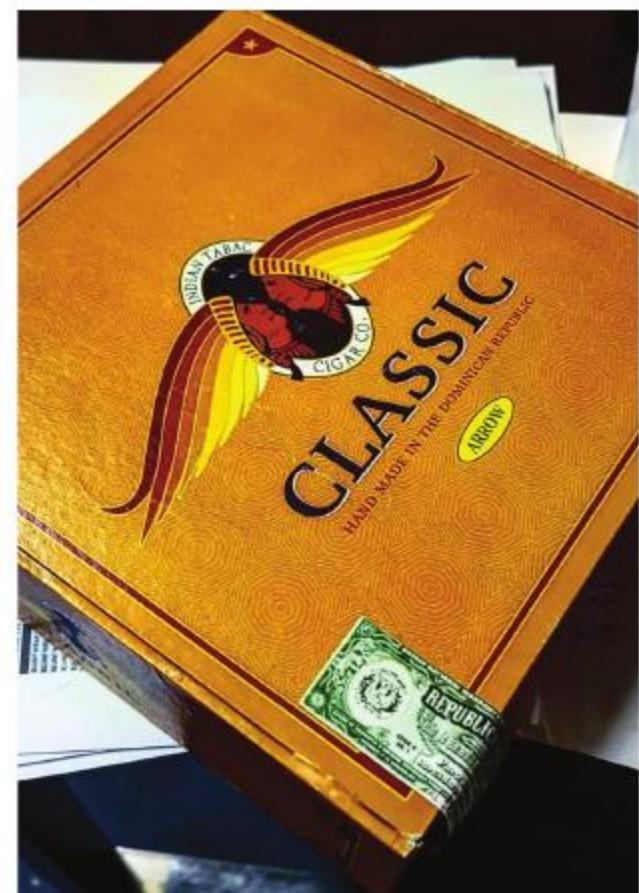
Initially, the duo bought one machine and made about 5 million cigars. By 2008 they got serious and picked up new machines and a few years later they were making nearly 300 million cigars annually.

> Zanghi's first cigar was made in 1990 by UST in Honduras, a companion to his father's Indian Cigar Motorcycle Company. "When it fell all apart, I was still in North Carolina and still had all the cigars. The only thing I had left from Indian Motorcycle Company was the cigars and the Indian Tabac Company."

longer making cigars for outsiders: rapidly growing backorders meant cutting loose all private label work. UST gave him back his bands and boxes, leaving Zanghi in the lurch. But he soon found another factory in Danlí. He was getting tobacco wherever he could, but then the Plasencias saw the hard work he was putting in, making the cigars then going up to the States to sell them, all as a one-man-show. They helped Zanghi get tobacco and eventually brought him into their factory.

membership to the club and a car so he could get on the road selling his Indian Tabac cigars. His father complied.

It was at the Grand Havana room where Zanghi officially launched Indian Tabac and he also met an attorney who was crazy for cigars and asked Zanghi if he wanted a partner. The guy was Rocky Patel. The two hit it off. Zanghi worked out of Rocky's office and became roommates with Rocky in Venice. From 1995 through 1997, Zanghi was doing all the work and Rocky was the



In 2010, Zanghi wanted to get back into premium cigars. Sinclair owned the trademark Debonaire and gave it to Zanghi, saying "it fit him." Being a one-man show again with Debonaire—the blender, the selector, the curing guy—he took his time. The first Debonaire cigar debuted at the Procigar festival in Santiago, Dominican Republic in 2012. Debonaire is a slow growth line. As Zanghi notes, it is a super premium cigar with low production due to the steps he takes with the tobacco, including steaming it with distilled water to remove mineral residue on the leaves. Considering it has avoided any price increases over the last six years, Debonaire is not such a high priced cigar when others are now over \$20 and Debonaire is still at \$12–\$15 per stick.

THE RETURN OF INDIAN MOTORCYCLE...AND A CIGAR

The Indian Motorcycle company had disappeared entirely by 2003, but re-emerged in 2008, albeit modestly. In 2011, the company was sold to Polaris

> THAT WAS THEN. Above: Phil Zanghi created Indian Tabac Cigar Co. as a high school senior. Rocky Patel joined the fledgling firm as a silent partner in 1995, and later became an integral part of operations. By 2001 Patel had become sole owner, ultimately re-branding the firm in his own name. Left: Zanghi, Patel, and original Debonaire trademark owner Danny Sinclair.

and since then things have taken off. A short while later, that Zanghi heard from friend Chris Topper, owner of Topper Cigars, that Polaris was talking with a licensing agent he knew. It seems the new Indian Motorcycle Company wanted a cigar to go with the bike. Chris told the agent, "boy do I have a guy for you," and put him in touch with Zanghi.

While Zanghi still owned Indian Tabac, he didn't want to resurrect that brand, instead he wanted to use Indian Motorcycle's trademark. After negotiations, Polaris agreed and Zanghi be-

a powerhouse with over 300 dealerships around the world and a billion dollars in sales. All of that helped Zanghi.

From 2016 up until last year, Zanghi's products were distributed by Drew Estate. The arrangement gave Zanghi a chance to take a break from his one-man operation. But things didn't feel right, so this year, he went back out on his own with the backing of De Los Reyes—the Reyes family's Dominican Republic company and factory. Now, Debonaire House directly manages all facets of its U.S. business operations including distri-

> While Zanghi still owned Indian Tabac, he didn't want to resurrect that brand, instead he wanted to use Indian Motorcycle's trademark... Zanghi became one of the few true licensees—a worldwide exclusive regarding tobacco.

came one of the few true licensees—a worldwide exclusive regarding tobacco. His first cigars came out in 2015 under the Indian Motorcycle brand—a pair of blends featuring a Habano or Maduro wrapper. Both sold well because they were well priced at \$7 to \$9 each and they carried the famous Indian name. Polaris was rapidly building Indian into

bution, sales, and marketing. It entered into a partnership program with United Parcel Service' (UPS) Cigars Direct program which allow it to ship cigars directly from the factory to tobacconists and cigar retailers in the United States.

He released the first line extension to the Indian Motorcycle cigar brand, the Indian Motorcycle Shade, as a Canadian

exclusive in May through Brigham 1906, followed by its U.S. release at the 2019 IPCPR Trade Show in July. It features a Connecticut seed wrapper grown in Ecuador, and is offered in Robusto (5 x 50) and Toro (6 x 52) formats. The new blend joins the line's two original blends: Habano (Ecuadorian Habano wrapper) and Maduro (Connecticut Broadleaf wrapper), both of which are offered in Robusto, Gordo, Toro and Churchill formats. All three blends use Dominican binder and a blend of Central American fillers.

Zanghi says the licensing partnership with Indian has been so successful it now makes up about 75 percent of all of his sales. Since Indian is a worldwide brand, the cigars are now being sold in Europe, Asia, the U.S., and Canada.

Due to tobacco licensing requirements, the brand is only sold in a handful of Indian Motorcycle dealerships, so primarily it found at traditional cigar stores. But Zanghi says the relationship with Indian gives him extra support.

"What helps me is working with Indian directly where they will send people from the dealerships with motorcycles to the events. It brings so much legitimacy to the actual brand and I am not just a licensee I am the worldwide tobacco division of Indian you could say. They are amazing people and very honest guys and very astute. I couldn't ask for a better partnership."

While cigar sales are continuing to grow for Indian Motorcycle, it is also helping Zanghi with his Debonaire line, opening new accounts and possibilities for that cigar. As for the future, Zanghi says next year he plans to add a whole line of Indian accessories—lighters, humidors, and more. But he will never lose sight of the cigars. "I am working on it to be even better," adds Zanghi. "I've got some really great things that have happened and new partnerships with tobacco growers here in the D.R. and people in my company. The shade is going to do great. The whole line is growing exponentially. And we're making better and better cigars so people don't think it is a gimmick." **S**

Debonaire House, Santiago, Dominican Republic, Tel: +809-276-7441, Web: debonairehouse.com.



> **THIS IS NOW.** Zanghi (above) returned to premium cigars in 2010 and developed the Debonaire brand, then created the Indian Motorcycle Cigar under an exclusive worldwide licensing agreement with Polaris, the current owner of Indian Motorcycle. Right: Single stick pouches. Below: Indian Motorcycle Shade, the brand's third and newest blend.





Missouri Meerschaum Company: Corn Cob Pipes, 150 Years Strong

The company that invented the corn cob pipe and put its community on the map continues to dominate its niche category. > STAFF REPORT

Hugging the southern bank of the Washington River some 50-odd miles west of St. Louis, the small city of Washington, Missouri has long been known as the "Corn Cob Pipe Capital of the World." This year, the company that pioneered that industry—Missouri Meerschaum—has been celebrating its 150th anniversary, having earned the unique distinction of being both the first and last corn cob pipe producer not only in Washington, but throughout the world. It's also one of Missouri's oldest factories, period.

The city and the industry owes it all to company founder Henry Tibbe, a

Dutch woodworker who emigrated with his family from Holland in 1866 after losing his workshop there to fire. He ultimately settled in Washington to start a new life and easily found a market for his skills, opening a shop and supporting his family.

Phil Morgan, general manager of Missouri Meerschaum Company, explains that the story of corn cob pipes actually starts with the early pioneers who came to America and attempted to mimic the Native American's practice of whittling pipes from cobs. Legend holds that in 1896 a local farmer asked Tibbe if he could turn a few bowls out of corn



cobs on his lathe, and bore out the chambers on his borer. The process proved a natural, and Tibbe made some complete pipes of his own to sell in his shop. They proved to be local hit, and it wasn't long before he was spending more time making pipes than on his woodworking. Within a few years, production of corn cob pipes became his sole business.

By 1872, the company H. Tibbe and Son had been formally established, consisting of Henry and his son Anton. The pair experimented with various fillers to both smooth the outside surface of the cobs and to provide greater longevity. The products were marketed as Tibbe Corn Cob Pipes.

In 1878, the Tibbes received a U.S. patent for their process of improving the "durability and appearance" of cob pipes by filling the outside pores of the pipes with

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"plaster-of-paris, other suitable plastic mass or cement," as well as other design details. That same year, the factory was moved to Front Street in Washington.

Rapid growth followed, and the following year H. Tibbe Son and Company was formed by Henry, Anton, and financial backer George Kahmann, their products offered for sale under the name Tibbe Cob Pipes or Missouri Cob Pipes. The word "meerschaum" is derived from a German word meaning "sea foam," the name of both the white Turkish clay-like material used to carve high grade pipes, and of the pipes themselves. According to historical accounts by Anton, it wasn't until some time between 1879 and 1883 that Henry's brother Fritz likened the light, porous corn cob pipes and their cool smoke to that of the more expensive meerschaum pipes and coined the name "Missouri Meerschaum." The nickname stuck, and the name was formally adopted in 1883 when the company registered the trademark.

The simple wooden building which originally accommodated the H. Tibbe & Son Company was soon replaced by a new two-story brick building constructed on the corner of Front and Cedar Streets. This building later had a third floor added and over the years four more additions were built to accommodate growing production. In 1907, the H. Tibbe & Son Co. became the Missouri Meerschaum Company.

A nationwide distribution system was established for the pipes and, due to the popularity of the corn cob pipe, other pipe firms began to emerge. Between the turn-of-the-century and 1925, there were as many as a dozen corn cob pipe factories in Franklin County alone, most in Washington near the Missouri River.

Ownership changed hands in 1912 when the company was purchased by Edmund Henry Otto. It remained in the Otto family for over 60 years, with Edmund's son Carl and grandson, Steve. In 1978, it was acquired by Fendrich Industries Inc.

of Indiana who owned it until 1983 when it was sold to John and Geraldine Brandenburger. In 1988, it was purchased by the present owners, Michael Lechtenberg, Robert Moore, and Larry Horton, who are committed to continuing the company's 150-year tradition well into the future. Today, there are about 35 employees working in the same brick building on Front Street who produce, pack, and ship about 3,000 pipes per day to nearly every U.S. state and about 13 foreign countries, about 700,000 pipes annually in all.

MINIMAL MODERNIZATION, MAXIMUM TRADITION

Cob pipe making has not changed much since the first pipes were fashioned; they still require a lot of hand labor, although some operations have benefited from shrewdly adapting machines from other uses.

Back when the industry began, cobs from an open-pollinated corn served nicely for the pipes. Today's pipes are made from a special non-GMO white hybrid corn developed by the University of Missouri. The variety produces big, thick, tough cobs. The corn is grown on 140 acres owned by the company in the Missouri River Valley, north of the river. Company employees do the corn picking, and haul the corn to the crib area, also located in the river valley. The corn is shelled using only old, out-of-production shellers dating to the 1930s, as the newer machines break up the cobs. The cobs are then stored in the upper two levels of the factory for a year or two until they are properly dried and cured.

Actual production of the pipes begins with the cured cobs being dumped into a chute that sends them down to the lowest level of the building. The remaining husks are removed and the cobs are fed into multiple gang saws where they are cut into uniform lengths. The cob pieces tumble onto a conveyor belt of a grader that sorts them by size. Tobacco holes are bored into the cobs, then most go to one of the four turning machines to be shaped. It's the turning or shaping process that determines the pipe style. Some larger pipes are still turned by hand.

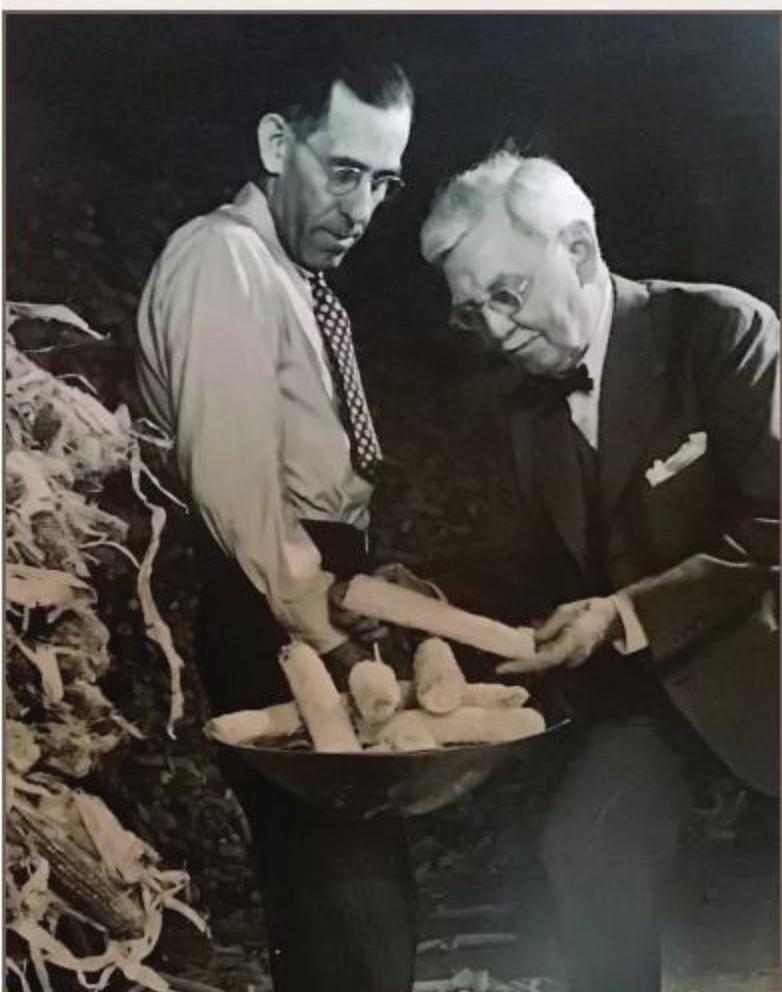
A white plaster coating is then applied to the bowls and they are allowed to dry a day before being sanded smooth. A



> Above: Henry Tibbe (far right) with his family shortly before they emigrated from Holland in 1866. Pictured, (l. to r.), are Henry's brother Fritz, his wife Johanna, his stepdaughter Margareta, and his son Anton. Below: The company's former building in Washington, Mo., which it outgrew prompting it to build its current nearby location (left)



> Above: Company founder Henry Tibbe (left), a Dutch wood turner who began to produce corn cob pipes in 1869 in Washington, Mo., sparking an entire regional economy and eventually becoming known as the "father of the corn cob pipe." Above right: Tibbe's son and business partner, Anton.



> Left: The second owner of Missouri Meerschaum, Edmund Otto with his business partner, Julius Rettke. Rettke and Otto were the creators of the company's turning machines, patented in 1944, and still used to this day. The Ottos owned the company from 1912 to 1980, building it into a modern business. Above: Female employees in the factory in the 1920s.



>Missouri Meerschaum Co. uses a special hybrid corn variety with extra-large cobs, grown nearby in the Missouri River Valley, to make its pipes.

boring machine bores the stem hole, then bowls are varnished either by being tumbled in a cement mixer or run through a lacquer spray booth. Then they go to the finishing room where a metal ferrule ring is attached to the wood stem that has been printed to look like cob. The plastic bits (mouthpieces) have a filter inserted and are then hammered into the ferruled stem. The stems are glued into the bowls, a label is placed on the bottom, the pipes are packaged, and they're ready for shipment to all parts of the world.

There are 18 different styles of corn cob pipes being produced today. Most also have a variety of bowl shapes and come with either a bent or straight stem. While Missouri Meerschaum corn cob pipes are popular as souvenirs—the company custom imprints models with city names, businesses, or events—most are actually sold for the same smoking pleasure that first fueled their popularity over a century ago.

The company's iconic pipes have been enjoyed by many notable personalities, but perhaps none more so than famed World War II commander U.S. General Douglas MacArthur, a long-time fan of corn cob pipes who actually sent his own proposed design for his desired "dream pipe" to Missouri Meerschaum Company hoping for a custom pipe. The company obliged, and the design

eventually became a regular production model, the MacArthur 5-Star Corn Cob Pipe. To this day, in honor of the general, the factory still burns a ring around the shank—a practice that MacArthur was known to undertake to each and every new pipe he received. Upon his relief of service by President Harry Truman during the Korean War, Missouri Meerschaum Company was inundated with orders for the iconic pipe, launching it into its place as a historical legacy.

In recent years, the company has also introduced a series of its own branded old American-style pipe tobacco mixtures blended by Russ Ouellette at Pipes and Cigars International, designed specifically to pair with the smoking properties of corn cob pipes. There are four pouch mixtures: a Cavendish (Great Dane), an American/English (American Patriot), and a Burley (Missouri Pride), as well as a more modern-style Virginia/Perique (Country Gentleman). This year, the company also released a new batch of its Independence Day Blend, a soft aromatic English blend with Cyprian Latakia and vanilla, as well as Missouri Meerschaum 150th Anniversary Crumble Cake, a blend of Virginias, Burleys, Virginia-based black Cavendish, and just a slight touch of vanilla. Both tinned tobaccos are blended by Sutliff Tobacco Company.

It's been a big year for Missouri Meerschaum Company, capped by two celebrations—one in April and a second in October—that offered the local Washington community rare tours of the factory's production area (which is normally closed to the public), not to mention live music, food and drink, and even games. Of course, the Missouri Meerschaum Museum & Retail Store—a folksy step back in time and home to the company's resident mascot, Cobb the red tabby cat—offers a wide variety of corn cob pipes, tobaccos, accessories, apparel, gifts, and souvenirs six days a week to local residents and tourists alike.

The *St. Louis Manufacturer* wrote in 1898 that "The city (Washington) and surrounding country owe their present prosperity largely, if not entirely, to Henry Tibbe, the inventor of the corn cob pipe." Today, 150 years after its founding, Missouri Meerschaum Company may be the only remaining manufacturer of corn cob pipes, but its stature within the Washington community and the tobacco industry is as large as ever. ■

Missouri Meerschaum Company,
400 West Front Street, PO Box 226,
Washington, Mo. 63090-0226, Toll-free:
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- KRISTOFF
- LA AROMA DE CUBA
- LA GLORIA CUBANA
- LA HISTORIA
- LA OPULENCIA
- LA PALINA
- LA PROMESA
- LA RANJA
- LA VIEJA HABANA
- LARS TETENS
- LARUTAN
- LAST CALL
- LEAF BY OSCAR
- LEBIJOU 1922
- M BY MACANUDO
- MACANUDO
- MAGIC TOAST
- MAXX
- MEHARI
- MERITAGE
- MI QUERIDA
- MONTECRISTO
- MY FATHER
- NAT SHERMAN
- NEW WORLD
- NUB
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- PARTAGAS
- PERDOMO
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- QUORUM
- ROCKY PATEL
- ROCKY PATEL "MERITAGE"
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- ROMEO Y JULIETA
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> Left: The walk-in humidor at Chaloner's Cigar House, Adrian, Michigan, featuring fully installed 100 percent Spanish cedar wall modulars and a center island display/tasting table all crafted by Wood Projections..

"My husband did a lot of research," recalls Fabiola, who describes her husband as a perfectionist. "We found all the materials and all the seals and all the parts that needed to be used to create a cabinet with a good seal." They also discovered a major flaw with the previous work. "This other guy was using pine, or some other wood, to make his cabinets. We did the research and we found out that Spanish cedar was really the kind that you should use to make humidors," Fabiola explains. "So it wasn't just the cabinet, it had to be built with the right materials so it can maintain the proper humidity level. So we found a Spanish cedar supplier."

A few cabinets were built, and the cigar retailer ordered a few more for some of his own clients. "Then all of a sudden he disappeared. We never found out what happened to him," says Fabiola.

The relatively short-lived experience might have been quickly forgotten as a one-off job, but Thomas was intrigued. Having diligently documented his first-ever cigar commissions, he decided that targeting this specialized niche could be a good opportunity for his small business. To gain exposure for his capabilities, Thomas created a website showcasing the work.

"A few people started contacting us little by little, and all of a sudden within a few years we were pretty well known in the industry. I quit my job," Fabiola laughs, "and I started helping him with customer service, orders, phones, bookkeeping, a little bit of everything."

"We started out with a very small space. And as orders started coming in, we started increasing our manufacturing space. We hired a couple people." Thomas used to do everything by himself—the construction, the finishing, the packing, the crating—but with a small staff, many of whom have been with the company for years, he has been able to share those responsibilities.

Wood Projections, Inc.: Hand Crafting the Finest Cigar Shop Humidors

For over 20 years, the small Miami-based company founded and operated by the husband-and-wife team of Thomas and Fabiola Karolewicz has been slowly growing through word-of-mouth referrals, focusing its expertise specifically to premium cigar retailers.

> BY E. EDWARD HOYT III

When woodworker Thomas Karolewicz applied his fine carpentry skills to construct his first humidified cigar cabinets 23 years ago, he was venturing into somewhat uncharted territory. His wife Fabiola—who was working a job in retail at the time and often chatted with customers about her husband's work—learned of a cigar shop that had a need for Thomas's capabilities.

The one-time hobbyist, who honed

his woodworking skills into a professional career, was already well versed in crafting customized furniture and wall units, but wasn't familiar with the specialized details that accompany cigar humidification. The quality of a previous woodworker's efforts for the cigar shop hadn't met the owner's expectations, and Thomas—spotting plenty of opportunity to improve the workmanship—was happy to embrace the challenge: if he was going to do it, he was going to do it right.

To this day, each partner in the husband-and-wife team still focus on their original roles at Wood Projections, Inc., with Fabiola handling nearly all of the interaction with clients, and Thomas running the shop's design and production operations.

In many ways, the chance introduction to the commercial humidor market represented a perfect opportunity for Thomas's talents: traditional wood working techniques but required a higher degree of knowledge of functional details and material sourcing than typical local craftsman could provide. Thomas also brought an eye for perfectionism, guaranteeing a top-quality product.

"I think that's one of the things that really stand out with our work," Fabiola explains. "Any little defect we see in our shop, we think if we see it, anybody else can see it too, so he tries to do as perfect of a job as he can," always looking to improve the quality of the finished product.

Ever since that first humidor job in 1996, Wood Projections has been fully committed to sourcing the most appropriate materials for its projects. And when it comes to withstanding the challenging humidity levels that are required to store premium cigars, there is only one kind of wood suitable for humidor work, one that actually helps maintain proper humidity levels.

"To this day, all of our humidors are made with 100 percent Spanish cedar," says Fabiola. "It's gotten expensive and it's gotten hard to find, but we have the resources and we have companies that import the Spanish cedar just for us." Most shipments originate in Central or South America, and Wood Projections works with multiple suppliers who each attempt to keep their own inventory stocked as well as can be, so materials are readily available for the Miami workshop. Wood Projections works with many clients who specify color stains, from subtle to rich, or sometimes even painted exteriors, but hands down Fabiola's preferred finish is bring out the Spanish cedar's naturally rich hues and grain with a clear coat finish. Many retail customers agree.



> Top: Cigar Republic, Little Rock, Arkansas;
Right: Mr. B's, Carbondale, Penna.; Below:
Yaxel Cigar, Coral Gables, Fla.

Then, there is the specialized hardware used in display cabinets. For models with sliding glass doors, the company used to buy tracks from a company that made sliding boat windows. Eventually, Wood Projections acquired the actual die used to make the tracks and improved the designs to better suit their use in humidors.

"We changed the track so it is specifically designed for our purposes," Fabiola





> Casa de Montecristo (*above*) and Burn by Rocky Patel (*right*) are two of Wood Projections' higher profile clients, but the vast majority of the company's work has for smaller, single location stores.



explains. "So we own our own die. We have a company that mills our aluminum track here in the U.S."

Domestic production and sourcing is another point of pride for Wood Projections. "We like to promote built-in-the-USA products," Fabiola says. "We build all of our products here in our shop, including our doors that are made with polished Spanish cedar hardwood," she says. "But we also try to get as many parts as possible that are milled and produced here in the U.S. to keep the product as American-made as possible." It's a significant point of differentiation compared to off-the-shelf imports.

"There are a lot of Chinese companies making humidors, but they don't hold up to the humidity because they're made with the wrong materials," Fabiola continues. "And they don't have the capability of making custom made humi-

dors because if they import cabinets from China, they only have one or two products. But a huge percentage of our work is custom made because we have access to all the materials here in the U.S."

Whether a job is crafted entirely to a customer's exact specifications and dimensions, or one of the company's "standard" products, each piece that Wood Projections produces is built from scratch, so even small modifications to a standard design can be readily accommodated. The company can also match a store's existing cabinet humidors.

"If we make a 60 inch cabinet as a standard product, but someone needs a cabinet that is only 54 inches, they're not paying a premium price because it's

custom made," Fabiola explains. "We try to accommodate whatever the customer needs without having to go above and beyond their budget. So when we say 'custom,' it's because they're able to pick the color, they're able to pick the kind of glass they want, they're able to pick the kind of lighting they want, but it doesn't necessarily mean it's three times the price that they would pay for a standard cabinet."

With the widespread growth of cigar lounges, either within existing cigar shops or as standalone locations, humidified cigar lockers have become a major draw, and the company has worked with a wide range of traditional and custom designs, from free standing units to built-ins.

Fabiola recalls customers who are looking for a really contemporary design; they don't want anything with moldings or other details, just a clean and sharp look. "I send them pictures of work that we have done and they say, 'Yes! You know exactly what we want!' So it's really nice when you're able to communicate with your customer and have the same vision they have."

"A lot of times customers never come to our shop," Fabiola continues. "They never see how we do our products. They see what we have done before, and they trust us to do exactly what they have in mind. And it's really cool. We love what we do and we take a lot of pride in our work and our craftsmanship."

Wood Projections also produces components for a lot of walk-in humidors, including slotted shelving and gondolas, all constructed from Spanish cedar. "The fact that we have all the right materials to build a walk in humidor, customers call us for that specific item because any cabinet maker can do it, they just don't have the right materials to be able to build them."

Whether they are working directly with the owners of a single location shop, or a professional architecture firm on behalf of a large multi-location chain, Wood Projections' years of experience and in-depth knowledge comes into play in different ways, all ensuring successful results.

"We get big projects that have an entire store layout, cigar locker, walk in humidor display humidor, everything. We do those jobs according to their specifications, but a lot of times the designers don't even know how a humidor is made," says Fabiola. "So we have to go back and tell them, 'okay we can do this, but we need to design it in a way that it has to have a seal, or it has to have this lighting track.' Even though we sometimes get designs from architects, we might have to go back and ask them to make some changes."

On the flip side, small shops often lack the resources of professional designers or planners, and need a greater level of assistance in bringing their vision and dream for their space to life. Wood Projections is more than happy to help.

"We guide them through the construction of the walk in humidor," says Fabiola. "We don't make it for them—they still do it with the local contractor. But we advise them on what materials to use. We advise them on where to locate the entrance, where to locate the shelving, what kind of shelving to use, what kind of humidification system to use."

Large or small, Wood Projections handles all projects in the same basic manner from a production standpoint, handing off installation to the customer. Everything the company produces is made at its Miami workshop, and is shipped wherever it will be installed. "The customer always has to have a



> Cabinets and cigar lockers made by Wood Projections feature traditionally constructed solid wood doors in traditional designs including raised panel and shaker style, but owner Thomas Karolewicz is equally adept at crafting more contemporary designs including sleek slab doors or embossed glass doors at Cigar Republic USA, Fort Lauderdale, Fla. (top right).

local carpenter or contractor or handyman—or whoever they want to use—to install the units," Fabiola notes, but stresses that everything is made to be easily installed.

For many years, Wood Projections purchased cabinet humidifiers from American Cigar Accessories, specifically the popular HumidiFresh model, to provide its customers with a complete, ready-to-use cabinet humidor solution. A few years ago, Wood Projections purchased that company and its proprietary humidification designs, and now manufactures the units themselves—in the USA—adding yet another level of service and expertise to its offerings.

With a global clientele—the company ships humidors to Canada, Puerto Rico, Europe, Scandinavia, and even

Australia—and the ever-expanding culture of fine cigar shops and lounges, the future remains bright for Wood Projections.

"In 23 years we have grown a lot, but we still consider ourselves a pretty small company," says Fabiola, explaining they are very happy to be catering to the very exclusive premium cigar niche. "We like to think that when the customer is opening their crate with the most important, precious investment, they look at it as a fine piece of furniture. They don't look at it as just a humidor."

Wood Projections, Inc., 19200 SW 106 Ave., #20, Miami, Fla. 33157, Toll-free: (877) 971-9663, Tel: (305) 971-7883, Fax: (305) 232-9108, Email: sales@woodprojections.com, Web: woodprojections.com.

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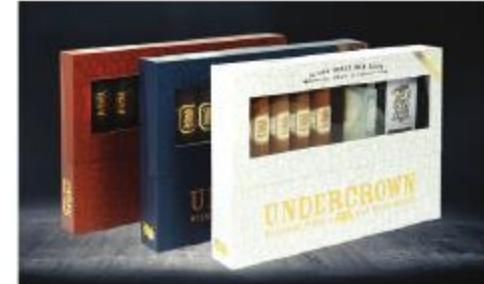
Premium Cigar Highlights

> **Drew Estate**, Miami, Fla. (drewestate.com), in celebration of its 20th Anniversary, released **Undercrown ShadyXX** in collaboration with Shady Records. Originally released in only 10 Detroit area retailers in 2014, Undercrown Shady remains one of the most demanded limited editions in the Drew Estate portfolio. This powerhouse blend, like the Undercrown Corona Viva, features a "toothy" Mexican San Andres wrapper, "spicy" Connecticut Stalk Cut Habano binder, and top-quality filler leaves from Nicaragua and Brazil. ShadyXX is offered in a 5 x 50 box pressed belicoso, and is packaged in a gold-embossed 10-count petaca, suggested retail \$104.



Line extensions to both the Fat Bottom Betty and Sweet Jane lines were unveiled for national release. **Fat Bottom Betty Toro** (6 x 50) comes in a 10-count box, \$95 retail. **Sweet Jane Dia de los Muertos** (6 x 50 box press toro) is presented in 20-count boxes, \$181.94 retail, and is the ninth special release vitola to be offered exclusively to Drew Estate Lounge Cigar retailers, joining selections under the Liga Privada No.9, Tabak Especial Dulce and Negra, Undercrown Maduro, Herrera Estelí, and Joya de Nicaragua Cuatro Cinco, Antano, and JOYA Red brands.

Three new gift sets were unveiled: **Undercrown Maduro**, **Undercrown Shade**, and **Tabak Especial Negra**, each containing five toro-sized cigars as well as a branded lighter and cutter that are exclusive to these sets. Suggested retail, \$47.99 each.



containing 10 cigars, \$72 per box retail.

The new **Tabak Especial Gordito** (6 x 60) is available both in Dulce and Negra blends, packaged in 10 count boxes, \$102.90 retail. Perfect for pairing with morning coffee, the **Tabak Especial Dulce Gordito** is wrapped in a creamy



Ecuadorian Connecticut wrapper with a "lush" Sumatran binder and "rich" Nicaraguan fillers. **Tabak Especial Negra Gordito** is wrapped in a very dense Maduro wrapper, ideal with an after-dinner espresso.



All 5-packs ship in a 5-count countertop merchandising solution with clip strips to be hung in any retail location or ideally on Drew Estate's new **Manhole Cover** display, available upon request. The following five-packs are offered: **Undercrown Shade Toro** (6x52), \$44.60 retail; **Undercrown Maduro Toro** (6 x 52), \$44.60 retail; **Tabak Sampler Negra**, \$38 retail; **Tabak Sampler Dulce** \$38.00 retail; **ACID Kuba Kuba** (5x54) \$49.25 retail; **ACID Kuba Maduro** (5 x 54), \$49.25 retail; **ACID Cold Infusion** (7x44) \$42.55 retail; **ACID Toast** (6 x 52) \$48.40 retail; **ACID Blondie** (4 x 38) \$27.50 retail; and **La Vieja Habana Cuban Corojo Bombero** (6 x 54) \$22 retail.

BOTL (Brothers of the Leaf) has returned, this time as a Drew Diplomat Retailer brick-and-mortar exclusive. A "passion project dedicated to every cigar geek around the world," the line honors botl.org, an early online cigar community.

Three traditional sizes are offered, presented in 15-count boxes: Corona (5 1/4 x 42), \$140 suggested retail; Corona Gorda (6 x 46), \$150 retail; and Lancero (7 x 38), \$160 retail. The cigars are wrapped in a "bold" broadleaf wrapper, "layered in complexity" with an Ecuadorian Connecticut binder and capping off the nuance are rich fillers from Nicaragua.

The limited edition **Undercrown Shade Suprema** has launched to Drew Diplomat retailers nationwide. The 6 x 50-54 perfecto is rolled Dominican Criollo 98, Nicaraguan



Corojo, and Nicaragua Criollo filler leave with a rich Sumatran binder and creamy Ecuadorian Connecticut Shade wrapper. The limited vitola presents a bolder profile on the palate compared to core sizes while remaining a smooth smoking experience, according to the manufacturer. It's packaged in a 5-count box, suggested retail \$47.90.

The company has released **Tubos** of their most popular brands, packaged in 25-count bundles and shipping



Offered are **ACID Kuba Deluxe Toro Tubo** (6 x 52), \$300 retail; **Undercrown Maduro Toro Tubo** (6 x 52) \$223; **Undercrown Shade Toro Tubo** (6 x 52) \$223; **Undercrown Sun Grown Toro Tubo** (6 x 52) \$223; **Tabak Especial Dulce Toro Tubo** (6 x 52) \$232; **Tabak Especial Negra Toro Tubo** (6 x 52) \$232; **Kentucky Fire Cured Just a Friend Tubo** (6 x 52) \$187.50; and **Kentucky Fire Cured Just a Friend Sweets Tubo** (6 x 52) \$187.50.

The **ACID Accents** collection is a new ongoing series of regional exclusives available to Drew Diplomat retailers in specific regions celebrating the 20th Anniversary of ACID cigars, and debuts with two initial releases. **ACID Accent Jay Street Posse**, a 4 1/2 x 52-62 figurado exclusive to Drew Diplomat retailers within a 50 mile radius of New York City plus all of Long Island, honors Drew Estate's birthplace of Jay Street in Brooklyn. It features a "brash" Sumatran wrapper over "robust" Nicaraguan binder and fillers. It's sold in a 10-count soft pack, suggested retail \$92. **Acid Accent B-More 410**, a 4 1/2 x 60 vitola, is exclusive to all Maryland Drew Diplomat retailers. This bold blend also features a Sumatran wrapper and is the "perfect complement to the Charm City." Suggested retail is \$80 per 10-count soft pack. Future ACID Accents releases are currently planned for Texas, California, Atlanta, and Chicago.

> **Ventura Cigar Company**, Moorpark, Calif. (VenturaCigar.com), debuted a new collaboration project between Benjamin "Benji" Menendez and Manuel "Manolo" Quesada spearheaded by Ventura Cigar General Manager Michael Giannini for the company's Cuban Cigar Factory series, which brings the "importance of old world Cuban expat expertise to the palates of the present and generations to come." The **Benji**



Menendez for Cuban Cigar Factory

Cigar Factory has a rich, silky smooth blend featuring a Dominican binder, Dominican and Nicaraguan fillers, and a Connecticut



Ecuadorian wrapper. **Manolo Quesada for Cuban Cigar Factory** is a "rich and savory blend" featuring an Ecuadorian binder, Dominican fillers, and a Habano Ecuador wrapper. Both Cuban Cigar Factory cigars are crafted at the Quesada family's MATASA factory in the Dominican Republic, in collaboration with Ventura Cigar Company. Each blend is offered in three sizes—Robusto (5 x 50), \$12.99 each; Toro (6 x 50), \$13.99 each; and Belicoso (6 1/2 x 52), \$14.49 each, presented in boxes of 20 cigars.

The company also added **Chapter 3 to its Archetype Cigars** story, with two new tobacco blends inspired by the work of psychologist Dr. Carl Jung and mythographer Joseph Campbell and blended and crafted by Ernesto Perez-



Carrillo his EPC factory in the Dominican Republic, marking his third cigar collaboration with Ventura Cigar. **Sacred Scales** is a full-bodied, full-flavored cigar offering a rich, signature Perez-Carrillo smoking experience filler tobacos from Nicaragua, an Ecuadorian binder, and a

San Andres Maduro wrapper from Mexico. **Dawn of Destiny** is a medium-full-bodied blend of Nicaragua fillers and binder with a smooth Ecuadorian wrapper. Both blends are available in 5 x 50 Robusto, 6 x 52 Toro, and 6 x 60 Gordo vitolas.

> United Cigars Group, Nashua, N.H.

(UnitedCigarGroup.com) unveiled the new look of its **La Gianna Havana** brand to commemorate the brand's 25th



Anniversary on the market. The two-piece boxes, designed by Davidoff of Geneva, feature a removable

painted lid that slides into a rear slot to display cigars in the humidor, while new

artwork was designed by award-winning graphic designer Nelson Alfonso of Selected Tobacco. Blended at the

Davidoff Diadema Cigars de Honduras, S.A. factory in Danlí,

Honduras, La Gianna Havana is offered in Natural and Maduro in Bambino (4 x 44), Corona

(5 1/2 x 44), Robusto (5 x 50), Toro (6 x 54), Torpedo (6 x 52), and Churchill (7 x 48). Retail prices range from \$6 to \$8 per cigar, sold in boxes of 20.

S



> L. to r.: Pictured at the 2019 IPCPR Trade Show in Las Vegas, Nevada in July are Dylan Austin, president, Davidoff Americas; Beat Hausenstein, chief executive officer, Oettinger Davidoff AG; and Eddie Simon, chief marketing officer, Oettinger Davidoff AG.

New responsibilities notwithstanding, the rise and transitions have been easier with Davidoff, Austin says, in large part because "our company is brand led."

He is only the fourth president of Davidoff Americas in the last century.

When asked if he feels the pressure of taking on such a large role at a historic company, Austin says simply, "Of course. This is a great responsibility."

Austin also recognizes that Davidoff is a global brand, known throughout the world for its premium products and exceptional quality.

"Being part of a global company means there will always be changes and transformations," Austin says noting worldwide IT changes that Davidoff has implemented in the last year. "But we always stay focused on delivering quality, premium products to our customers."

PRESERVATION AS THE KEY TO THE FUTURE

After more than a decade in the industry, Austin is well-versed in the litany of challenges facing both his company and his peers.

Preserving the Premium:

The Key to Davidoff's Future Success

Davidoff Americas' new president, Dylan Austin, applies his decade-long experience immersed in Davidoff brand marketing and sales to his latest role overseeing the global brand's largest market.

> BY CRAIG WILLIAMSON

When Dylan Austin was promoted to president of Davidoff Americas earlier this year after overseeing the company's sales and marketing division, he wasn't quite sure what to expect.

"My days are a lot busier," Austin now says after nine months on the job.

But Austin is humble. Being charged with one of the largest market segments for one of the industry's most premier brands says a lot about his leadership and vision.

As he approaches the one year mark on the job, Austin is looking to move the prestigious Davidoff brand forward in a counterintuitive way—by preserving much of what's been done in the past.

A DECADE LATER

Austin joined Davidoff AG in 2008. Originally serving as director of marketing, he rose to head of marketing, then head of marketing and sales for the Americas. His domain included North America, Latin America, and South America, as well as the company's duty-free operations.

A decade later, he oversees more than 100 U.S. employees and the largest market for a well-known global company.

This now includes managing human relations, legal, and operations departments—as well as continuing to play a heavy role in sales and marketing.

"Time management is more important than ever," he notes.



> Dylan Austin, president, Davidoff Americas.



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> Austin and Hauenstein joined by Michelin-star chefs Thomas Keller (*left*), and Heiko Nieder (*right*), at Keller's Per Se restaurant in New York City in October 2019 for a Davidoff Chefs Edition cigar event. Keller and Nieder are two of the five international gourmet chefs who Davidoff collaborated with to create the Davidoff Chefs Edition 2018, a 6 x 54 limited to 5,000 boxes of 10 cigars released worldwide, part of the company's 50th anniversary celebration last year.

All of the regulatory, legal, and legislative challenges the Cigar Association of America has worked on in recent years are familiar to Austin.

And while there has been a great deal of discussion about changing and evolving to meet these new challenges, Austin's perspective is worth highlighting to the industry.

> "I have seen the industry take a lot of interesting turns. For us, it's about preserving the premium nature of our category."

—Dylan Austin, president, Davidoff Americas

"I have seen the industry take a lot of interesting turns," says Austin. "For us, it's about preserving the premium nature of our category."

Austin wants to accelerate the influence of Davidoff and the brands assets by preserving the exclusivity of its products.

"You can't put a Lamborghini dealership in every neighborhood," he notes.

Austin says Davidoff's key point of differentiation is protecting their exclusive distribution network. Meaning, Davidoff is in it for the long haul.

"Davidoff's success is reliant on our relationships with our retail partners and delivering solutions that help build their businesses" Austin says. "Preserving brand equity and reinforcing strict com-

mercial policy is critical to delivering on this promise."

Austin says he intends to stay focused on Davidoff's existing Appointed Merchants program, which the company has used for over 25 years to connect with 280 retail locations that distribute its flagship Davidoff brand.

"The value of a protected network is



> Davidoff Chefs Edition 2018 (*above*); Camacho Coyolar (*below*).



that you do not oversaturate the market; we don't want our partners competing with each other."

Austin acknowledges that Davidoff is not alone in this approach.

"We know we're not the only ones that do it this way, but for us it is something we value and want to preserve. This preservation is the key to our future success," he says.

A BIGGER ROLE

With the company's strong brand and influence, Austin says Davidoff is prepared to contribute to the broader industry fight as well.

"We want to continue our contribution to the big-picture fight," he says.

Davidoff and Austin have been key allies of CAA as we've worked through the issues facing our industry in 2019.

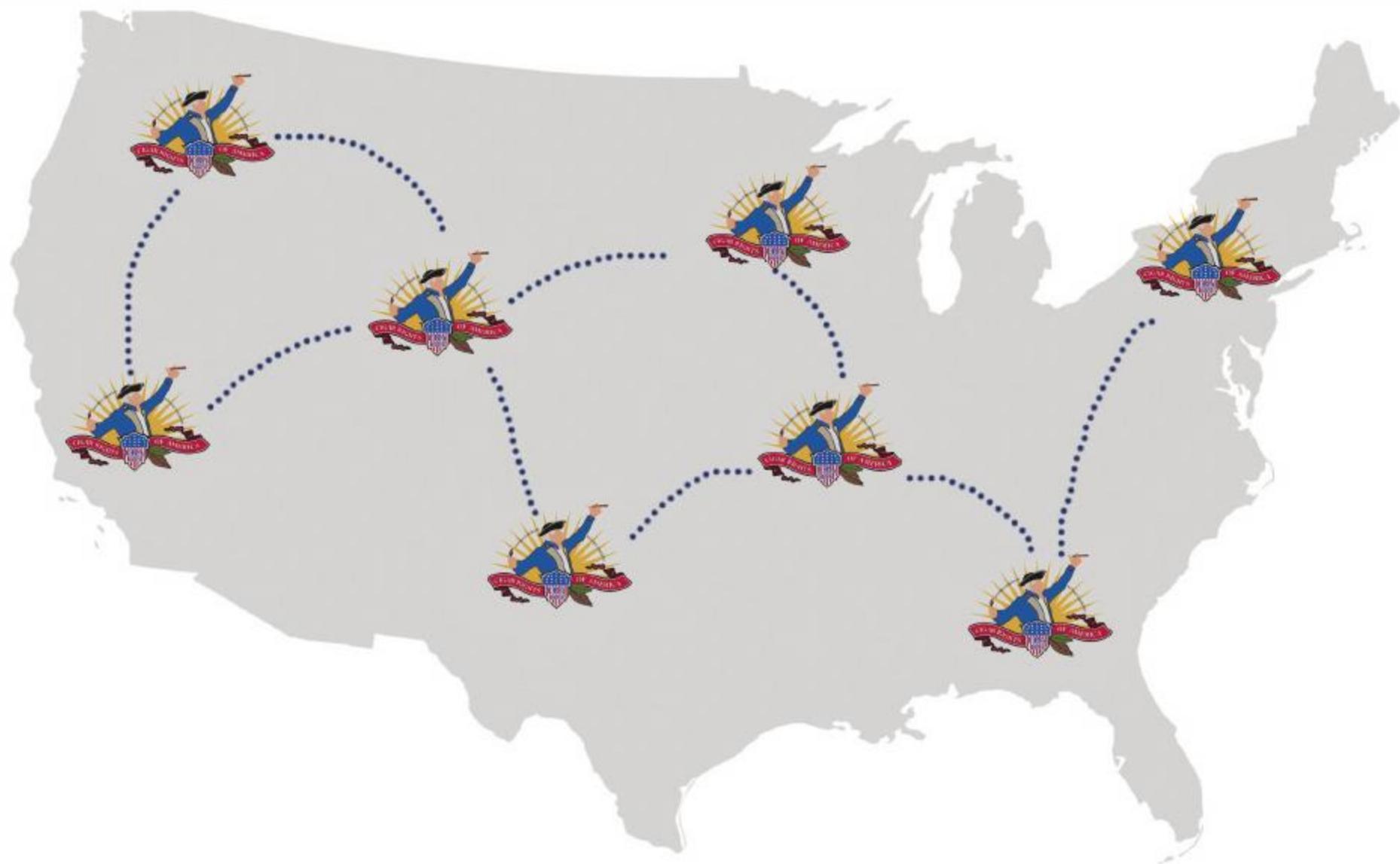
The large number of state level fights on tobacco 21, flavor bans, and other aggressive regulatory and legal attacks will only continue to increase in the years to come. And we are excited to know that Davidoff will be eager to play a role alongside so many other member companies.

As an association, CAA prides itself on unifying the entire industry on regulatory, legislative, legal and policy fronts.

We also recognize that we are only as strong as our member companies. Austin's leadership at Davidoff gives us great comfort that our companies will continue to grow and prosper, despite the hurdles we face in the marketplace. **S**

Craig Williamson is president of the Cigar Association of America, Tel: (202) 223-8204, Web: cigarassociation.org.

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"This is a great program to expose our store to customers that may not know we're here. With more travelers using the internet to find restaurants and hotels, why not for cigar shops too?"

- George 'Shorty' Koebel, Owner of Havana Connections in Richmond, Virginia

"Our businesses need all of the marketing exposure possible, and with CRA appealing to a national audience, this is well worth the cost. I also like the fact that we can have some input on issues affecting the industry."

- Joel Schwartz, Owner of Ford & Haig Tobacconists in Scottsdale, Arizona



"This can be a great way to highlight store events, especially when new cigars are coming onto the market. When the manufacturers are in our shop, this can be a way to reach a broader audience than just those that walk into the store, or that we see on a regular basis."

- Julie Neumann, Owner of Cigars & More in Libertyville, Illinois

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Photo: Iwan Ries



Illinois Supreme Court Hears Chicago OTP Tax Case

An industry lawsuit to have tax struck down weighs in the balance.

>BY THOMAS BRIANT

On September 17, 2019, the Illinois Supreme Court heard oral arguments on whether the Chicago excise tax on other tobacco products should be upheld or struck down. This litigation began back in 2016 after the Chicago City Council enacted a \$1.80 per ounce tax on roll-your-own smoking tobacco and smokeless tobacco, a \$.60 per ounce tax on pipe tobacco, and a \$.20 per cigar tax on little and large cigars.

The lawsuit seeking to have the Chicago OTP tax rates struck down was filed by NATO, the Cigar Association of America, the International Premium Cigar and Pipe Retailers Association (now the Premium Cigar Association), the Illinois Association of Wholesale Distributors, the Illinois Retail Merchants Association, Arangold Corporation d/b/a Arango Cigar Company, and retailer Iwan Ries & Co.

More than two years ago, the Illinois Circuit Court issued a ruling that struck down the tobacco products excise tax adopted by the Chicago City Council. Specifically, the court found that Illinois Municipal Code Section 6(a)(2) pre-empts a home rule municipality (of which Chicago is one such home rule city) from imposing a tax on other tobacco products.

The language of Illinois Municipal Code Section 6(a)(2) states that a home rule city shall not impose a tax on other tobacco products unless the city had already adopted such a tax before July 1, 1993. Since the City of Chicago had adopted a cigarette tax prior to July 1, 1993 but not a tax on other tobacco products, the court found that state law prohibited the city from adopting the OTP taxes.

However, the City of Chicago proceeded to appeal the Illinois Circuit Court ruling to the Appellate Court

> Founded in 1857, downtown Chicago's Iwan Ries & Co.—a party to the industry lawsuit challenging Chicago's OTP tax—is America's oldest tobacco shop.

of Illinois. Upon appeal, the appellate court overturned the Illinois Circuit Court decision. This case was appealed by NATO and the other plaintiffs to the Illinois Supreme Court because it involves a fundamental tenet of Illinois law that if the plain and ordinary language of a statute is clear it must be interpreted as written.

In this case, the plain language of the 1993 amendment to Section 6a(2) specifically prohibits the imposition of any municipal tobacco products tax when "such a tax" was not enacted prior to July 1, 1993. Nevertheless, the appellate court chose not to follow this fundamental requirement of statutory construction, or even the basic principles of grammar, but rather read into Section 6a(2) additional words and terms in order to interpret Section 6a(2) contrary to its plain and ordinary meaning.

This case is also important since it raises the serious question of whether the appellate court was correct in ignoring the fact that, for 23 years, the City of Chicago itself had interpreted Section 6a(2) consistent with its plain and ordinary meaning by not enacting an OTP excise tax which is directly opposite to the appellate court's decision and, equally significant, that the City of Chicago attempted on three separate occasions—but failed each time—to convince the Illinois legislature to change Section 6a(2) to give it the power to impose a new excise tax on other tobacco products.

With the oral argument hearing now concluded, the Illinois Supreme Court will take the case under advisement and issue a ruling most likely by the end of this year. **S**

Thomas Briant is executive director of the National Association of Tobacco Outlets (NATO). Toll-free: (866) 869-8888. Web: www.natocentral.org.



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VooDoo E-Liquids Sport Fresh New Look

Phillips & King is pleased to announce that VooDoo, their most successful proprietary vapor brand, is starting the new year with a new look. The entire line will be outfitted in fresh, modern packaging designed to unify the brand and products and provide customers with a more intuitive experience. The packaging update visually matches compatible products, so the entire system of e-liquids and vaporizers are simple to understand, merchandise, and purchase, offering benefit to both Phillips & King's retail customers and their end customers.

The minimalist look and feel of VooDoo's new packaging is also designed to help the product stand out on-shelf amongst its competitors, elevating the value-based brand to catch the eyes of a more mature, upscale audience. VooDoo vaporizers and e-liquids have long been favorites of consumers for their very affordable and easy-to-use devices. These packaging updates will not affect the actual VooDoo product, which will continue to provide consistent, flavorful enjoyment with concentrated high-quality ingredients and innovative technologies.

"We're really just trying to offer our customers a top-notch experience," says Steve Davidson, Brand Manager at Phillips & King. "The market is maturing, the VooDoo brand is growing up. We want to broaden its appeal at a higher level— one that really reflects the quality of the product. And if we can better help our customers understand the product— how to merchandise it and how to use it, then this design update is a big success."

The VooDoo product line includes Meta Series Vaporizers and Tank Systems; Omni Series 3-in-1 devices for herb, wax and oils; and 12 flavors of e-liquids

Phillips & King International, Moorpark, Calif., Web: phillipsandking.com.



RJR Vapor Co. Launches Velo Nicotine Pouches

R.J. Reynolds Vapor Company (RJRVC), an operating company of Reynolds American Inc., a member of the British American Tobacco Group, has expanded its "modern oral" portfolio with Velo, a line of tobacco leaf-free and spit-free nicotine pouches.

Consisting of high-quality ingredients, Velo addresses key adult tobacco consumer preferences for choice, convenience, and consideration, while providing a flavorful and enjoyable experience, the company said in a statement. Velo is a tobacco-derived nicotine product that comes in the form of nicotine pouches, contains no tobacco leaf or other tobacco plant matter. Unlike traditional moist tobacco products that require spitting, Velo is hassle-free and can be used anytime, anywhere.

"Our teams are working hard to expand our range of nicotine products to provide adult tobacco consumers with a diverse set of choices," said Shay Mustafa, senior vice president, oral business unit. Earlier this year, the company expanded its dissolvable nicotine lozenge product, Revel (see left).

Velo will be available in more than 70,000 outlets over the next few months, offered initially in two flavors—mint and citrus—and two nicotine strengths, 2mg and 4mg.

R.J. Reynolds Vapor Company, Winston-Salem, N.C., Web: rjrvapor.com, velo.com.



Revel Nicotine Lozenges

Revel dissolvable nicotine lozenges from R.J. Reynolds Vaping Co. provide consumers with a unique and quality alternative to traditional combustible and smokeless tobacco products. Revel is made by extracting nicotine from tobacco leaves and infusing it into dissolvable lozenges. This process results in a product that consumers can enjoy anytime, anywhere. Packaging is child-resistant, and Reynolds Vapor has voluntarily implemented specific guidelines that restrict the content of marketing and advertising materials for Revel. Revel retailers are required by law to verify that the consumer meets age of purchase laws and to place Revel in a non-self-service location.

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► Chacom Pipe of the Year 2019 from Arango Cigar

For this new limited edition series, Chapuis-Comoy & Cie offers a well-balanced bent egg shape that's particularly pleasant in the hand, deriving its originality from its oval stem and pipe. Acrylic stems accept 9 mm filters (adapter supplied), leaving the choice of filter to its owner. This briar pipe is made in limited numbers in Chacom's Villard-Saint-Sauveur workshops near Saint-Claude, France. It is presented in a Chacom box, accompanied by its cloth case and its certificate of authenticity. Choose from seven different styles of briar finishes: Oiled Natural (Series 1), Waxed Natural (Series 100), Shiny Gray Natural Top (Series 200), Contrasted (Series 300), Bright Red (Series 700), Brown Sandblast (Series 900), and Matte Black Sandblast (Series 1000), as well as Morta (Bog Oak) Sandblast (Series 500) in its natural brown-gray color.

Arango Cigar, Northbrook, Ill., Toll-free: (800) 222-4427, Fax: (847) 480-1221, Email: sales@arangocigarco.com, Web: arangocigarco.com.



► Eastfarthing, Panna Cotta Join Sutliff Private Stock

Sutliff Tobacco Company has added two new mixtures to its Sutliff Private Stock range.

Eastfarthing pays homage to fantasy author J.R.R. Tolkien, as the Eastfarthing of the Shire was home to the well-referenced village of Frogmorton in his many novels. Described as a delightfully smooth and full-bodied English blend, it has just enough well-aged, stoved Latakia to satisfy the most experienced English smoker's taste, but balanced enough with just a hint of whiskey to create a very interesting English blend.

Panna Cotta meanwhile beckons with the creamy sweetness of its flavorful blend of Virginia, Black Cavendish, and just a touch of Burley, enhanced with the delicate flavor of Madagascar vanilla bean extracts.

Sutliff Tobacco Company, Richmond, Va., Tel: (804) 233-7668, Email: orders@Sutliff-tobacco.com, Web: Sutliff-tobacco.com.



► Sun Bear, Cornell & Diehl's Latest Small Batch

A blend of fine red and bright Virginias balanced by Basma leaf from 2014 and Izmir Orientals from 2013, Sun Bear commands itself with subtle notes of South Carolina garden-grown honey from the personal beehives of Jeremy Reeves, head blender of Cornell & Diehl. The natural honey complements the subtle drizzling of silver tequila and Elderflower for a natural, refined tasting tobacco with an underlying, swashbuckling boldness. Sun Bear is a unique experience for the connoisseur who appreciates a dance of flavor components dominated by quality Virginias.

Laudisi Distribution Group, Inc., Longs, S.C., Tel: (843) 491-4150, Email: Sales@laudisi.com, Web: laudisi.com, cornellanddiehl.com.



► New World Offers Meerschaum Range

New World Luxury Brands believes in authentic craftsmanship, crafting genuine, hand-whittled pieces of art featuring gorgeous textures and ridges in unique designs.

In addition to a traditional briar wood range, New World offers dozens of different styles of meerschaum pipes, each made by the best Turkish hand carvers from real block meerschaum.

Shown above is a beautifully patterned ball-style pipe decorated with sterling silver spigot stem and black acrylic stem. Other shapes include Calabash, Apple, Cherry Wood, Danish Bent, Rhodesian, and Freehands. The company also offers true one-of-a-kind Special Editions, one-off pipes in traditional and non-traditional themes, such as the Native American (below).

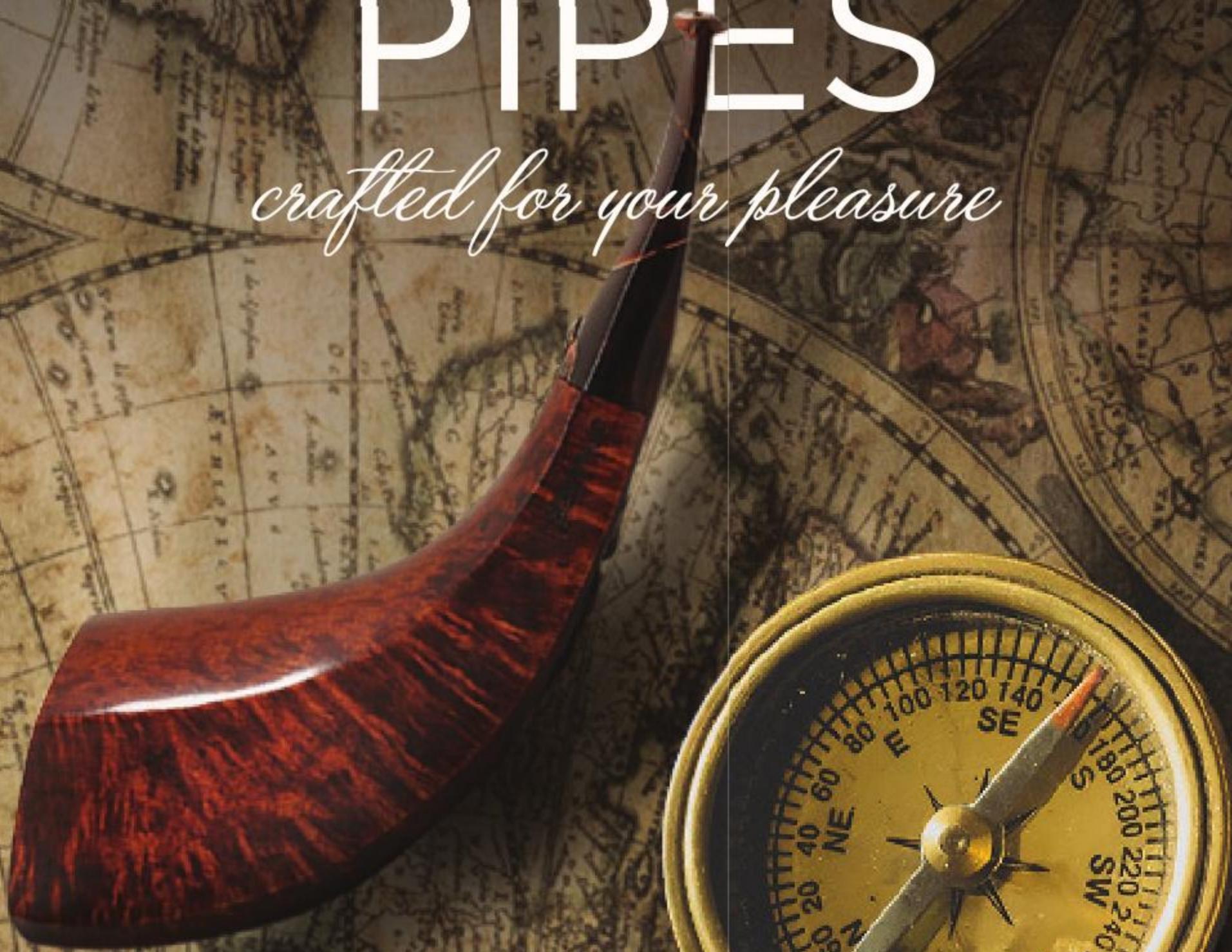
New World Luxury Brands

Pte. Ltd., Hong Leong Building, Singapore, Email: info@newworld-pipescigars.com, Web: newworld-pipescigars.com.



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► Plasencia Cigars Debuts Alma del Fuego

Plasencia Cigars has launched Alma del Fuego, the third release in a planned series of five cigars that make up the Nicaraguan-based company's signature Alma Series.

"Alma del Fuego is a manifestation of our ongoing commitment to offer top-quality cigars to both our retailers and consumers, and to continue building on our family's over 150-year tobacco legacy," said Nestor Andrés Plasencia, c.e.o. of Plasencia Cigars.

Alma del Fuego, which translates to "Soul of the Fire," is a representation of the volcanic soils that stem from the iconic Ometepe Island in Nicaragua, the land where the majority of the filler tobacco leaves for this cigar were harvested. A 100 percent Nicaraguan blend, Alma del Fuego radiates passion and amplifies Plasencia Cigars' efforts to provide the industry with a high-quality and innovative smoke.

The Alma del Fuego is available in three sizes: Candente (5 x 50 robusto), Flama, (6 1/2 x 38 panatela), and Concepción (6 x 54 toro).
Plasencia Cigars, Miami, Fla., Web: plasenciacigars.com.



► Casa Cuevas Ships New Cuevas Reserva Blends

Casa Cuevas Cigars has announced its recently unveiled Cuevas Reserva Natural and Cuevas Reserva Maduro are now shipping to retailers.

The **Cuevas Reserva Maduro** features a Mexican San Andres wrapper, a Dominican, Piloto Cubano binder, and Dominican and Nicaraguan (ometepe) fillers, this blend is a personal favorite of Luis Cuevas Sr. as it boasts a full-flavor smoking experience, in a perfectly balanced medium to full-bodied cigar.

The **Cuevas Reserva Natural** features an Habano binder with a mix of fillers from the Dominican



Republic, Nicaragua, and the U.S.A., all wrapped in an Ecuadorean Connecticut wrapper. This blend provides a perfectly smooth smoking experience which features nuanced earthy flavors.

"I am proud to have worked closely with my father and my son Alec Cuevas, who is now part of the family business, recreating this blend, said Casa Cuevas Cigars president Luis Cuevas Jr., of the project intended to be the Cuevas signature brand back well over a decade ago. "I am ecstatic that this brand has come full circle, as we can now present it as a family project to the consumer."

The cigars are packaged in vintage Cuban-style 20 count boxes, released initially in three vitolas—Toro (6 x 50), Torpedo (6 1/4 x 52), and Robusto (5 x 52)—with more to follow in the future. The cigars retail from \$9.90 to \$11.40 per stick.

Casa Cuevas Cigars, Miami, Fla., Tel: (786) 565-7977, Web: casacuevascigars.com.



► JdN Adds Cinco Décadas Fundador

In 2018, Joya de Nicaragua celebrated its 50th anniversary with the release of the elegant Cinco Décadas, considered the factory's crowning achievement.

"When we conceived the concept of the brand, we decided that every year until the next big anniversary, we would nationally release a size that would pay tribute to key characters that shaped the story of our company," said Dr. Alejandro Martinez Cuenca, chairman and owner of Joya de Nicaragua.

The new Cinco Décadas Fundador vitola, a 6 x 54 soft pressed Gran Toro, pays tribute to the visionaries that ignited the Nicaraguan cigar industry—Juan Francisco Bermejo and Simón Camacho. Made exclusively from prime extra-vintage leaves taken from Joya de Nicaragua's most exclusive collection of tobaccos, it carries an "immaculate balance accompanied by a luxurious complexity of sweet and spicy flavors. Its silky-smooth smoke delivers a rich and fulfilling experience," according to the manufacturer, Nicaragua's first cigar factory.

Cinco Decadas Fundador comes in a 10-count box with an MSRP of \$20 per stick.

Joya de Nicaragua, Estelí, Nicaragua, Email: info@joyacigars.com, Web: joyacigars.com; distributed in USA by **Drew Estate**, Miami, Fla., Tel: (786) 581-1800.



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Royal Agio Releases Balmoral Añejo XO Nicaragua, Balmoral Añejo XO Oscuro Lancero FT

Royal Agio Cigars USA has expanded its Balmoral Añejo XO lineup with the release of Balmoral Añejo XO Nicaragua, which "further rounds out the lineup," said the company in a statement.

This newest blend joins the Añejo XO (Brazilian Arapiraca wrapper), Añejo XO Connecticut, and Añejo XO Oscuro (Mexican San Andrés wrapper).

Balmoral Añejo XO Nicaragua blend is finished with a sun-grown Nicaraguan Habano wrapper and provides a "luxuriously bold experience with complex notes of rich oak, espresso, hazelnut and peppery spices that finish with a smooth, underlying natural sweetness," says the company.

The cigars are offered in the same vitolas as current Balmoral Añejo XO blends—Torpedo Mk52 (6 1/4 x 52), \$11.25 each MSRP; Gran Toro (6 x 52), \$10.50 each; Rothschild Masivo (5 x 55), \$9.75 each; Corona (5 7/8 42), \$9 each; and Petit Robusto FT "Flagtail" (4 1/4 x 48), \$8.50 each.

Also new from Royal Agio Cigars is the Balmoral Añejo XO Oscuro Lancero FT Edición Limitada—the second limited production lancero vitola released from Balmoral but this time in a full-bodied blend. A total of 2,650 boxes have been produced for global distribution, with only 500 boxes available for the U.S. The Balmoral Añejo XO Oscuro Lancero FT Edición Limitada (7 x 40), \$12.95 retail, is

finished with a sun-grown, stalk-cut Mexican San Andrés wrapper, and blended with a Dominican Olor binder and Nicaraguan, Dominican and exclusive Brazilian Mata Norte fillers that "embraces [the] palate with complex notes of dark chocolate, espresso and black pepper that finish with a smooth, underlying natural sweetness."

Royal Agio Cigars USA, Bradenton, Fla., Tel: (941) 896-6969, Web: agiocigars.com. balmoralcigars.com.



Elephant Ears: Full Bodied Broadleaf-Wrapped Shaggy-Foot Nicaraguan Puros from Nat Cicco

These unique cigars with a distinct shaggy foot resembling an elephant's ears are full strength, Nicaraguan puros, blended in Nicaragua with a time-tested Nat-Cicco tradition of meticulously aging and crafting cigars. Hand-made with 100 percent natural tobacco from the region, these premium long-filters deliver a bold, robust flavor right from the first draw and gradually shift to a medium-full smoke for the duration of the cigar. Four sizes are offered: the orig-

inal Elephant Ears (8 1/2 x 60) and Elephant Ears Junior (7 1/2 x 60), as well as the Baby Elephant Ears (7 1/2 x 54) and Baby Elephant Ears Junior (6 1/2 x 54) which have a smaller shaggy foot.

Zander-Greg, Inc., Pasadena, Calif., Toll-free: (888) 662-5111, Email: wholesale@zander-greg.com, Web: zander-greg.com.



Sutliff Tobacco Co. Named Regius Cigars Importer, Distributor

London-based Regius Cigars, founded in 2010 by Akhil Kapacee and first introduced to the U.S. in 2012, has named Sutliff Tobacco Company as its U.S. importer and distributor.

Initially aimed at the British market as an alternative to Havana Cigars

which dominate the local market, Regius Cigars maintain the nuances and flavor profiles which British smokers are accus-

tomed to while offering consistency and quality in the product. As a result, Regius is now one of the top-selling non-Cuban cigars in the U.K. and has been steadily growing in the U.S.

There are four main lines, all of which will be available through Sutliff Tobacco. Regius Black Label is the original and core line, offered in six vitolas, while the Exclusivo USA range comprises three lines—Red, White, and Blue Label. Regius also offers other special releases such as limited edition Selección Orchant, created in partnership with Mitchell Orchant of circa 1817 Alfie Turmeaus Tobacconist in London's Mayfair. Orchant is the biggest vendor of Havana Cigars in the UK.

The most recent release in the Regius portfolio is the Regius Maduro, Sungrown, and Connecticut.

Regius Cigars are made at the Plasencia factory in Estelí, Nicaragua, and all are Nicaraguan puros, with the exception of the Exclusivo Blue which uses a San Andres Wrapper from Mexico. The entire portfolio is considered to be mainly medium bodied, with the Blue label being a little more on the medium-to-full range.

Regius Cigars, London, England, Email: Sales@regiuscigars.com, Web: regiuscigars.com, **Sutliff**

Tobacco Company, Richmond, Va., Web: sutliff-tobacco.com.



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>2019 Limited Edition OpusX Purple Rain Cutters, Torch Lighters

The 2019 Limited Edition Fuente Fuente OpusX Serie "Heaven and Earth" Purple Rain Cutter H is produced in two finishes by Prometheus/God of Fire: Black Lacquer and Black Matte. Prometheus Cutter H is made with stainless steel double blades and cuts 60-ring (24 mm) cigars. A total of 1,000 are produced (500 black lacquer and 500 black matte) in 2019 and serial-numbered.

Prometheus also offers three different 2019 Limited Edition Fuente Fuente OpusX Serie "Heaven and Earth" Purple Rain lighters: Magma T, Magma X and Ultimo X lighters, each produced in either Black Lacquer or Black Matte finishes. The Ultimo X and Magma T are built with triple torch flames whereas the Magma X is a flat flame. All three Prometheus lighters have patented built-in punch cutters. The Limited Edition 2019 release of 1,000 units per model are produced 500 in black lacquer and 500 in black matte and are serial numbered.

God of Fire, Inc., Los Angeles, Calif., Tel: (323) 869-9200, E-mail: info@fuenteagedselection.com, Web: fuenteagedselection.com.



>JOB Adds Virgin Unbleached Cones

Pre-rolled and equipped with a tip to offer an easier way to pack, fill, and enjoy, JOB Virgin Cones, distributed by Republic Tobacco L.P., are made of unbleached, chlorine- and dye-free fibers that are responsibly harvested.

Vegan and GMO-free, JOB Virgin Cones are ultra thin (12 g/m^2) and lightly porous for a slow burn and truer taste, with minimal ash. With their natural brown hue, natural acacia gum adhesive and distinctive JOB watermark, the cones are part of the recently introduced JOB Virgin product line which is intended for the discerning and eco-conscious consumer who prioritizes quality, flavor and sustainability.



French-made JOB Virgin Cone Packs are available in two retail sizes: 1-1/4 Size, six cones per pack; and King Size, three cones per pack, packed 32 packs per display and 24 displays per case.

Republic Tobacco, Glenview, Ill., Tel: (847) 832 9700.



> Xikar's Enso Dual-Blade Cutter

In Japanese culture, the enso is a minimalist circle drawn in one stroke at a moment of clarity of the mind, symbolizing strength and elegance. It is also the spiritual inspiration for Xikar's new Enso cigar cutter, which features a synchronized dual-blade system where the movement of one handle actuates both finely-honed blades to open and close. The Enso is 2.5 inches in diameter and .5 inches thick—the same dimensions as Xikar's two-handle XO cutter—and will cut up to 72 ring gauge cigars with a 68 ring gauge cigar able to fit through the inside of the cutter. Enso will be available in a choice of six finishes: black, silver, red, blue, neon orange and neon green. Suggested retail price, \$99.99.

Quality Importers Trading Company, Weston, Fla., Toll-free: (888) 795-4839, Web: qualityimporters.com.

> Two New Cigar Cutter Collections Introduced by Elie Bleu

Elie Bleu is offering two new models of scissor-type cigar cutters, both crafted with stainless steel bodies and featuring Japanese tempered surgical stainless steel blades and cut up to a 60 ring gauge cigar.

The EBC-2 Round Cigar Cutter Collection

folds closed into a perfect 2-3/4-inch diameter circle and is offered in polished stainless steel with gold button; polished gold stainless steel with gold button; and polished stainless steel and button with etched pinstripe. Suggested retail price, \$210.



The EBC-3 Cigar Cutter Collection, a unique scissor-style, features etched marquetry handles in a choice of three different handle finishes: polished stainless steel, black, or gold. Suggested retail, \$230.

Reyns International,
Warwick, R.I., Tel:
(401) 921-5216, Email:
orders@reynsint.com,
Web: eliebleu.com.



> Select Draw Cigar Cutter Adds Obsidian Black to Original Model

With a passion for fine cigars, the founders of Select Draw set out to create a product that would enhance their smoking sessions. The result was the

Select Draw Cigar Cutter, "created for cigar enthusiasts by cigar enthusiasts," and available in Obsidian Black (right) or Original polished chrome. Poke as few or as many holes as desired: Select Draw delivers a slow, medium, or full draw that is "smoother and more enjoyable than imagined," allowing smokers to enjoy the true taste of their cigar, optimizing flavor, smoothness, and intensity. Select Draw is extremely durable, engineered from the finest aluminum with razor-sharp steel prongs and features a screw-on cap for drop protection. It's extremely light at only 3 oz, and comes with a velvet Select Draw bag. Suggested retail, \$33.99.

Select Draw Cigar Cutters, LLC, Jessup, Md., Email: sales@selectdrawcigarcutters.com, Web: selectdrawcigarcutters.com.

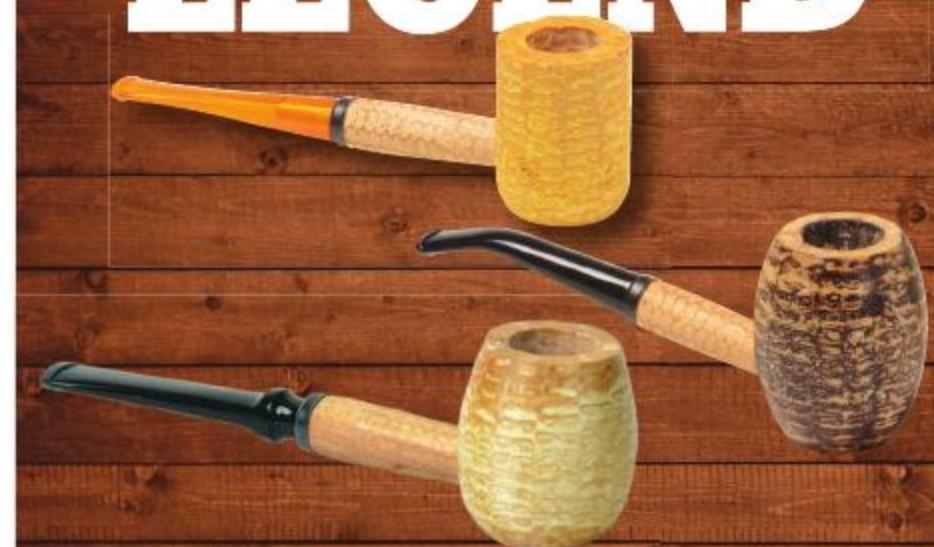


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A photograph of two men in suits, both holding cigars. The man on the left is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The man on the right is also smiling and has a puff of smoke rising from his cigar.

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